

STATEWIDE CENTER FOR
SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Training and Technical Assistance

CREATING A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOLKIT
FOR SCHOOLS



Developed by



CAI

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GLOSSARY

Bystander Intervention: Bystander intervention aims at increasing prosocial bystander behavior, which is when individuals who are not directly involved in a situation step in, either indirectly or directly, to intervene and diffuse potentially harmful situations.

Community Level Prevention: Community Level Prevention refers to interventions that focus on impacting the entire community. As opposed to interventions that impact individual behavior, these types of interventions impact everyone in the community. Examples include a policy change mandating all students receive healthy relationship programming, or a marketing campaign aimed to increase the entire community's understanding of bystander skills.

Consent: Affirmative consent is the knowing, voluntary, and mutual decision among all participants to engage in sexual activity. Consent can be given by words or actions, if those words or actions create clear permission regarding willingness to engage in the sexual activity. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent. The definition of consent does not vary based upon a participant's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Consent is also a legal term and the legal definitions of consent vary by state.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment in the context of schools is defined as unwanted and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that interferes with the right to receive equal educational opportunity. These behaviors can range from words (written or spoken), gestures, and/or unwanted contact. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination prohibited by Title IX.

Sexual Violence: The term sexual violence is an all-encompassing term that includes all unwanted behavior of a sexual nature, which includes, but is not limited to, rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment.

Social-Ecological Model: The Social-Ecological Model (SEM) is a public health strategy for effecting behavior change that requires engagement at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Every level of the SEM shapes the attitudes and behaviors of an individual.

Title IX: Title IX is a federal law that states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”¹ Sexual violence, including sexual harassment, are forms of gender discrimination that are prohibited by Title IX.

Trauma-Informed: Trauma-informed refers to services which include an understanding that trauma can happen to anyone, and its effects are not always visible. Trauma informed services attempt to address the needs and wishes of the individual with this understanding. This may include increased access to behavioral and mental health services, and an increased focus on physical and emotional safety.

1. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

INTRODUCTION



KEY POINTS

- What does it Mean to Work at the Community Level of Prevention?
- How is Creating a Healthy School Environment Different from Typical Prevention?
- What gets in the way of having a healthy school environment?
- How to Use This Toolkit

Schools can play a critical role, given their access to youth, in addressing student safety and wellness, including the prevention of sexual violence. Sexual violence remains one of the most pressing public health and criminal justice issues in the world, with adolescents being at an increased risk for violence. Schools, given their access and reach, are an ideal point of intervention as they have enormous potential to impact the wider community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has promoted working at the community level of prevention as critical in the prevention of sexual violence.² As part of community level prevention strategies, the CDC has highlighted creating protective environments as a key strategy in preventing sexual violence. The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH), under the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program has funded six Regional Centers for Sexual Violence Prevention (Regional Centers) to provide comprehensive and community level sexual violence prevention in high schools and middle schools and has also funded CAI to assist the Regional Centers in building their capacity to implement this initiative.

This toolkit outlines a strategic process geared towards RPE funded staff to transform schools and eventually school districts in their communities to become healthier and safer. The goal of the toolkit is to prevent all forms of sexual violence, which is an all-encompassing term that includes all forms of unwanted sexual contact including sexual harassment, through a comprehensive approach that focuses on the entire school culture, which we refer to as 'creating a healthy school environment'.

2. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

➤ What does it Mean to Work at the Community Level of Prevention?

The social ecological model shows us that community and society level interventions have the largest impact. Throughout this toolkit we discuss working at multiple levels, which include using strategies that impact not only the individual and relationship (such as education and individual programming), but also strategies that impact the community as a whole, such as policy and media (as outlined in section 5).

➤ How is Creating a Healthy School Environment Different from Typical Prevention?

When we refer to a healthy school environment, we are talking about a place where students feel safe and their physical health and emotional wellbeing is protected. This requires working at multiple levels to impact the social norms in the school or school district, as opposed to focusing on programming around a single initiative. Working at multiple levels means that we focus on multiple strategies at once, instead of one initiative such as education. For example, we may provide education AND also work on creating a policy, using media to promote relevant messages and ensure safety in the physical environment (i.e. school building, school yard) to make a larger impact on culture (see strategies outlined in section 5). Creating a healthy school environment focuses on increasing positive norms as opposed to focusing on negative norms. This can help us avoid the pitfalls of typical prevention programming that can sometimes unintentionally reinforce negative messages.

Through efforts of the Regional Centers, the NYS DOH has identified six social norms that many of the regional centers highlighted as common social norms they were addressing and also show promise in protecting students against sexual violence. These six social norms are:

1 Supporting and Affirming Consent

4 Healthy Masculinity/
Gender Expectations

2 Active Bystander Behavior

5 Healthy Relationships

3 Empathy and Emotional Health

6 Celebrating Diversity/
Respect for Others

This toolkit provides a process for working with schools and school districts to impact these social norms to make a positive impact on the safety and wellbeing of students.

INTRODUCTION

↪ What Gets in the Way of Having a Healthy School Environment?

Many times, despite best intentions, school staff feels overwhelmed by competing demands and might feel like it is difficult to implement initiatives that address the overall health of the students. Supporting schools to create a healthy school environment helps to streamline the various initiatives that schools are expected to accomplish with finite resources.

In addition, understanding how a healthy school environment aligns with state and federal recommendations and requirements can be used to create leadership buy in. The work outlined in this toolkit aligns with the CDC's Whole School Whole Community Whole Child (WSCC) framework for health, which emphasizes initiatives that support whole child emotional and physical health.

Our strategy also promotes compliance with Title IX requirements to offer adequate protections and to respond appropriately to all incidents of sexual violence. With mandates at the state and federal level around comprehensive student wellness, utilization of the toolkit can take the burden off schools by integrating programming that aligns with these state and federal initiatives.

↪ How to Use This Toolkit

■ Who is this Toolkit For?

This toolkit was developed for contractors funded through the NYS DOH under the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program, who work with schools and school districts (high schools and middle schools) in New York State.

■ Goal of this Toolkit

The goal of this toolkit is to provide a set of useful tools that will guide contractors through the process of working with schools and school districts to implement a healthy school environment, ultimately preventing sexual violence.

■ How to Use this Toolkit

The sections in this toolkit outline core components of creating a healthy school environment and guide contractors through a strategic process to change the social norms of the school community. Each section includes key strategies and tools to support contractors with this work.

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1:

Why We Need Healthy School Environment

Describes what healthy school environments are and why they are important

SECTION 2:

Recruitment of Schools and School Districts

Outlines how contractors can strategically determine the order in which they will reach out to and recruit schools and school districts to work with

SECTION 3:

Engaging Decision-Makers

Reviews key strategies to engage champions and decision-makers in schools and school districts, including preparing a pitch, meeting with each decision-maker, assessing their readiness to take on the initiative, and starting the process of securing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

SECTION 4:

Starting Your Work with Schools and School Districts

Outlines how to start working with schools and school districts, including ensuring there is commitment, establishing a workgroup, and conducting an assessment of the current environment as it relates to sexual violence and prevention efforts

SECTION 5:

Strategies to Support a Healthy School Environment

Reviews strategies to support a healthy school environment and how to work with schools and school districts on selecting the best strategies based on the assessment they conducted and the social norms they selected

SECTION 6:

Implementation Plan

Outlines how to develop an implementation plan for each selected strategy from Section 5. The implementation plan includes:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| ① Activities | ③ Team members |
| ② Person(s) responsible | ④ Timelines |

SECTION 7:

Promoting School and School District Success

Addresses how to promote schools' and school districts' success, including using earned media and writing up fact sheets or case studies on successes with other schools and school districts

SECTION 8:

Additional Materials and Resources

Contains additional tools and resources to support RPE staff with implementation

INTRODUCTION



Key Considerations

- Utilizing the comprehensive approach put forth in this toolkit takes time. Do not feel discouraged if it takes a few months to complete one of the sections
- The sections in this toolkit do not have to be addressed in the order they are presented and can be worked on simultaneously. The exception to this is section three, which discusses how to engage decision-makers. This is an essential step that should be worked on continually throughout the process, as each section requires decision-makers' support to be completed successfully
- It is important for contractors to work closely with decision-makers to ensure this initiative is successful
- By going through the process outlined in these sections, contractors will gain the tools necessary to implement comprehensive strategies at every level of the school system, resulting in a school culture that protects against sexual violence, as well as a variety of other issues affecting student and staff safety and wellbeing

SECTION 1

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS



KEY POINTS

- Healthy School Environments and Sexual Violence Prevention
- Social Norms for a Healthy School Environment
- The Impact of a Healthy School Environment
- Strategies for a Healthy School Environment
- Tools

This section describes what a healthy school environment means and what elements are present. It also describes why they are important and how these environments relate to preventing sexual violence and other public health issues.

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

➤ Healthy School Environments and Sexual Violence Prevention

In the context of sexual violence prevention, a healthy school environment is one where students and staff treat one another with respect, encourage healthy relationships, promote positive examples of sexuality, and support students' mental and physical wellbeing. If any incidents affecting student safety do occur, they are addressed in a way that promotes accountability while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff and students.

To create an environment like this, we need to comprehensively address the social norms of the school and/or district at multiple levels (i.e. policy, education, media) and enact strategies at each level aimed at increasing the safety and health of all staff and students, regardless of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation.

➤ Social Norms for a Healthy School Environment

To successfully make a school safer and therefore prevent violence and other issues affecting students, the *CDC Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence*³ has highlighted promoting social norms that protect against violence as a key strategy. The NYS DOH has highlighted six common social norms from Regional Center work that are shown to be connected to the prevention of sexual violence, through an overview of the risk and protective factors identified by the CDC.⁴ These social norms impact one another and may work in synergy. However, because most agencies don't have the resources to tackle all simultaneously, it is important for RPE staff to work with decision-makers to identify one or two of these social norms in the beginning. The six social norms are:

1 Supporting and Affirming Consent:

Most people know that sexual violence means lack of consent. However, what constitutes consent is often misunderstood by young people and adults alike. Many conversations around consent will involve discussions of healthy sexuality but can also be translated to other aspects of student health. Therefore, promoting positive social norms around consent increases safety both inside and outside the classroom.

2 Active Bystander Behaviors:

A bystander intervention describes incidents when someone who is not directly involved in a situation steps in and helps. Bystander intervention has been shown to decrease many forms of violence, from bullying and harassment, to sexual aggression and violence. Bystander intervention skills are learnable techniques that promote student safety and encourage a shared understanding of community safety and responsibility.

3. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>

4. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

3 Empathy and Emotional Health:

Encouraging empathy for others as well as overall emotional health of students has been shown as a protective factor against sexual violence. Encouraging empathy in students and supporting programs and learning environments that are protective of emotional health, not only prevent violence, but support the overall health of the child, and can promote prosocial behaviors that positively impact the environment at multiple levels⁵.

4 Healthy Relationships:

Experts agree that providing students with skills that promote relationship building and emphasize the care and wellbeing of others, sets them on the path for healthier relationships in the future. Research shows that healthy relationship education protects students from sexual assault in high school and beyond.⁶ Healthy relationship education also encourages skills that are translatable to student academic and professional success.

5 Healthy Masculinity/gender Expectations:

Rigid gender norms have been shown to foster various forms of violence and other issues that negatively impact school environments, such as homophobia and transphobia. Interventions that address these factors, such as promoting healthy masculinities, creating inclusive environments for LGBTQ students, and empowering girls and women, have been shown to prevent various forms of violence, and create healthy and safe environments for all genders and sexual orientations⁷.

6 Celebrating Diversity/respect for Others:

We know that diverse social circles are a protective factor against violence. Understanding how race, gender, and economic factors impact violence and other issues affecting students, and then creating programs to support initiatives that support inclusivity and respect for others, can work to create a healthy environment for all members of the community regardless of gender and/or socioeconomic status².

5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28581324>

6. Santelli JS, Grilo SA, Choo T-H, Diaz G, Walsh K, Wall M, et al. (2018) Does sex education before college protect students from sexual assault in college? PLoS ONE 13(11): e0205951. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205951>

7. <http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SAAM-2017-reduced-size-edited.pdf>

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

↪ The Impact of a Healthy School Environment

Feeling unsafe at school has been connected to decreased academic performance, missed school, and higher dropout rates.⁸ In addition, sexual violence victimization has been connected to many issues, including smoking⁹, alcohol and substance abuse^{10,11}, higher incidence of negative mental and physical health outcomes^{12,13}, and predisposes victims to other forms of violence¹⁴. Therefore, the reach of creating a healthy school environment extends far beyond issues relating to sexual violence and impacts student health and safety at every level.

↪ Strategies for a Healthy School Environment

Creating a healthy school environment takes time, as it involves a comprehensive and multipronged approach. In section five, we outline concrete strategies for developing a comprehensive plan. The strategies are:



Policies: Policies that support positive social norms around sexual violence are crucial. In addition, ensuring proper policies are in place at all levels supports sustainability of initiatives.



Handling Disclosures (Procedures): Schools are held accountable by Title IX requirements around responding to incidents of sexual violence, which includes properly responding to and handling disclosures of sexual violence. Creating protective environments includes having proper and appropriate systems in place to respond quickly and effectively to incidents when they occur.



Implementing Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Interventions: There are a growing number of programs that have shown to be effective in the reduction of sexual violence and/or in the reduction of risk and protective factors associated with sexual violence. Many involve individual and relationship level education. Examples include consent programming and bystander intervention training for students.

8. HOSTILE HALLWAYS, supra note 2, at 36-38

9. Kristman-Valente, A. N., Brown, E. C., & Herrenkohl, T. I. (2013). Child physical and sexual abuse and cigarette smoking in adolescence and adulthood. *The Journal of adolescent health* : official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine, 53(4), 533–538. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.06.003

10. Champion HL, Foley KL, DuRant RH, Hensberry R, Altman D, Wolfson M. Adolescent sexual victimization, use of alcohol and other substances, and other health risk behaviors. *J Adolescent Health*. 2004; 35(4):321–328.

11. Affifi TO, Henriksen CA, Asmundson GJ, Sareen J. Childhood maltreatment and substance use disorders among men and women in a nationally representative sample. *Can J Psychiatry*. 2012; 57(11): 677-686.

12. McFarlane J, Malecha A, Watson K, et al. Intimate partner sexual assault against women: frequency, health consequences, and treatment outcomes. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2005;105:99-108.

13. Campbell J, Jones AS, Dienemann J, Kub J, Schollenberger J, O'Campo P, Gielen AC, Wynne C. Intimate partner violence and physical health consequences. *Arch Intern Med*. 2002; 162(10):1157-1163. Available from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12020187>external icon

14. Herrera VM, McCloskey LA. Sexual abuse, family violence, and female delinquency: findings from a longitudinal study. *Violence Vict*. 2003; 18(3): 319-334

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS



Staff Training: Involving staff is crucial, as teachers and staff are integral parts of the school environment. Providing sexual harassment training to staff, educating staff around issues related to staff and student health, and involving staff as allies, are examples of staff involvement that promote an environment of safety for the entire community.



Engaging Parents: Parents are a critical part of a whole school environment and engaging them is an effective strategy to ensure success and sustainability of school wide change.



Communications Campaign: Media, including social media, are integral aspects of changing social norms. Successful media campaigns can have a wide impact on people's beliefs and feelings and successfully promote positive social norms in schools.



Intervention of the Built Environment: Looking at the physical environment is a way to protect students in their day to day interactions. Environmental interventions have been shown effective in various forms of violence prevention^{15,16,17} and have a positive impact on student safety.

You can use the following tools in this section to think about a healthy school environment and sexual violence in the school districts and schools in your community



Tool 1.1: Working on the Healthy School Environment Initiative Within Your Community is a worksheet that encourages you to reflect on sexual violence in schools in your community, its impact, and what motivates you to do this work.



Tool 1.2: Impact of Implementing the Healthy School Environment Initiative at Schools in Your Community encourages you to visualize the positive outcomes that would result from implementing an initiative that involves comprehensive sexual violence prevention strategies.

15. La Vigne NG. 1994. Rational choice and inmate disputes over phone use on Rikers Island. In *Crime Prevention Studies*, ed. RV Clarke, 3: 109–26. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press

16. Newman O. 1996. *Creating Defensible Space*. U.S. Dep. Housing Urban Dev., Off. Policy Dev. Res. Washington, DC

17. Lasley J. 1998. "Designing Out" Gang Homicides and Street Assaults. *Natl. Inst. Justice Res. Brief*, NCJ 173398, U.S. Dep. Justice, Washington, DC

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS



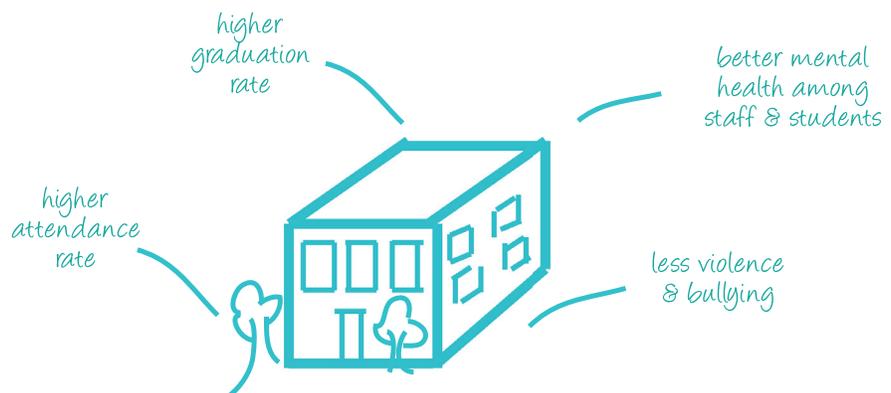
Tool 1.2: The Impact of Implementing the Healthy School Environment Initiative at Schools in Your Community

Worksheet

To effectively promote a healthy school environment and prevent sexual violence in schools and school districts, a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach is required. When this type of approach is taken, it should lead to a healthy school environment.

Directions: In the space below, draw a high school or middle school in your community and brainstorm the impact (i.e. outcomes) that would result from implementing this initiative. See the sample for inspiration.

Sample:



My Community:

SECTION 2

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



KEY POINTS

- Strategic Recruitment of Schools and School Districts
- Steps to Strategically Recruit Schools and School Districts
- Tools

This section outlines how to get schools on board with the healthy school environment initiative. It gives a step by step process that you can follow to strategically determine the order in which you will reach out to and recruit schools and school districts.

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

➤ Strategic Recruitment of Schools and School Districts

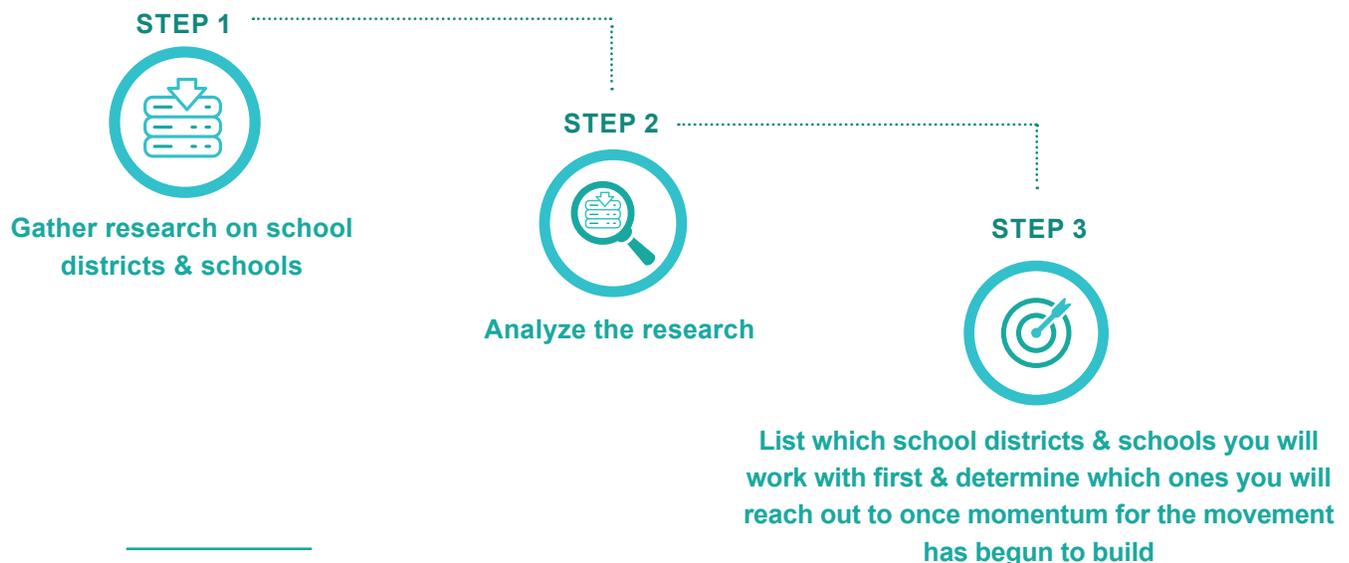
The first step to doing this work is for you, a contractor funded through the NYS DOH under the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program, to strategically think about which schools or school districts to start working with first. It is important to begin working with schools or school districts that are motivated to do this work, so you can build momentum for this initiative and use it to influence other schools or school districts that may be more reticent to come on board.

Schools or school districts to start with include those that have a comprehensive curriculum related to sexual violence prevention in place or that have done work previously to create healthy schools. Past work does not have to be specific to sexual violence, but might include work around other public health issues, such as substance abuse or other forms of violence.

Others schools to start with might be schools or school districts that have had a high profile incident in the past, or their students comprise of a relatively high population of demographic groups that research has found are the most impacted by the issue of sexual violence.¹⁸ These schools are often motivated to do this work and, in the latter case, can be motivated by sharing data about how sexual violence disproportionately impacts their student demographic groups more than others.

➤ Steps to Strategically Recruit Schools and School Districts

It is important to recruit schools and school districts in a strategic way that builds momentum for this movement. You can use the following steps when recruiting:



18. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Step 1: Gather Research on School Districts and Schools

For each school district and individual school building, conduct research on the following:

- School district report card found on the State Education website
- Demographic makeup of the school, especially in reference to populations most affected by sexual violence¹⁹
- School district website, looking specifically for the policy/handbook and current sexual and/or behavioral health policy or practice
- School district social media to determine if the topic of sexual violence prevention has been posted about, showing that they care about this topic and/or are working on it
- Any work you've done within the district, including assemblies, work with administrators, health teachers, or guidance counselors, and any work you've done supporting sexual violence prevention campaigns
- Any communication (phone calls, emails) that you received about a sexual violence incident
- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) data, if possible
- If the school administration, staff, or students have shown interest in addressing this issue, for example through discussions with you, walk-outs held about the issue, etc



Use Tool 2.1: Gather Research on School Districts and Schools to guide your research and record your results.

19. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Step 2: Analyze the Research

Once you have gathered the research outlined in step 1, it is important to analyze it. Spend some time thinking about which schools are motivated to do this work and will be easy to get on board, and which schools might be more challenging.

School districts or school buildings to start with may be those with:

- The highest incidence of sexual violence or recent high profile incident
- Schools with a relatively high population of demographic groups that research has found are most affected by sexual violence²⁰
- Interest in sexual violence prevention. For example, if you've done work there, received calls after incidents, or communicated with administration or staff about sexual violence prevention
- Policies to prevent sexual violence that are in place, communicated clearly, and enforced
- Those individuals or contacts with whom you have a good relationships

School districts or school buildings that may be more challenging to work with are those that have not done work in the area of sexual violence prevention, do not seem motivated to do work in this area, or may have competing priorities that take precedence.



Step 3: List Which School Districts and Schools You Will Work with First and Determine Which ones You Will Reach out to Once Momentum for the Movement has Begun to Build



After you have done your research, use **Tool 2.2: List of School Districts and Schools to Reach Out To** and list the group of schools that you will reach out to first.

Next, on the same tool, list a group of schools or school districts that may be more challenging to work with. These might be schools you will engage after you've gotten the first group started.



Tip: Don't bite off more than you can chew. Smaller school districts or one school in a large school district may be more manageable when starting out with this work.

20. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tools



Tool 2.1: Gather Research on School Districts and Schools

Worksheet

Before reaching out to school districts and schools to work with them, it is important to do research to get to know each school's experiences with sexual violence prevention efforts. This will help determine the order in which you will reach out to them.

Directions: For each school or school district, use the table below to gather research. Each column lists a different source of information you can consult to learn more about each school.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SCHOOL NAME	
School district report card found on the State Education website	
Demographic make-up of the school. Note the % of students who are most impacted by sexual violence	
School district or school website (policies, information in handbook, etc.)	
School district social media (postings about sexual violence)	
Work you have done at the school in the past (assemblies, interventions, work with principal or teachers, etc.)	
Communication you have had with the school about sexual violence incident(s)	
YRBSS data	
Interest in the issue (discussions, walk-outs, campaigns, etc.)	
Other Information	

RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Tool 2.2: List of School Districts and Schools to Reach Out To

Worksheet

Directions: Review the research you collected in Tool 2.1 and make note of the schools that might be the most interested in implementing the healthy school environment initiative at their school. These schools most often have:

- The highest incidence or recent incidents of sexual violence
- A relatively high population of demographic groups that research has found are most affected by sexual violence²¹
- Interest in sexual violence prevention. For example, if you've done work there, received calls after incidents, or communicated with administration or staff about sexual violence prevention
- Policies to prevent sexual violence that are in place, communicated clearly, and enforced
- A contact that you have a good relationship with

List the school districts and/or schools that you will reach out to first here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

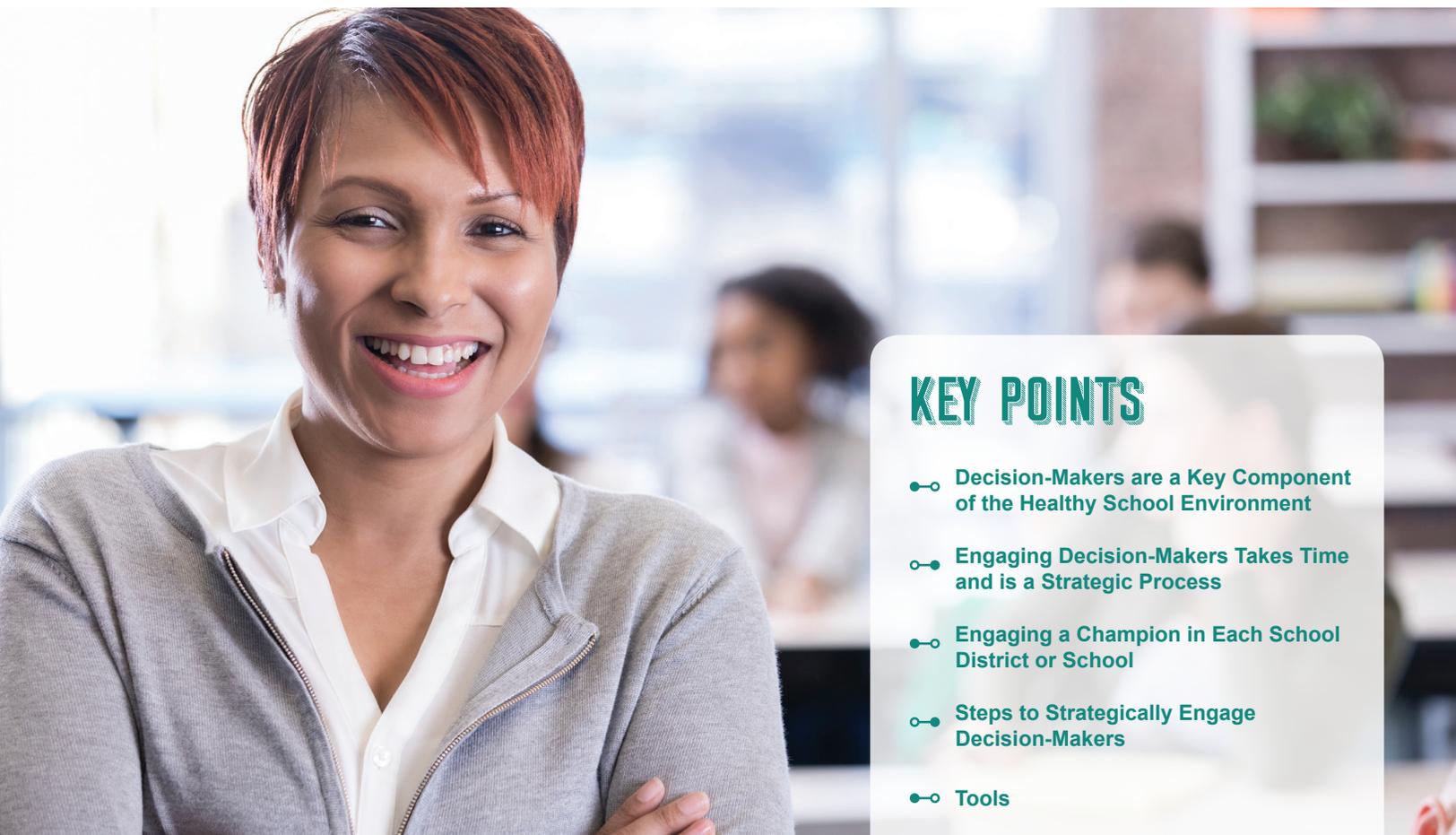
List the school districts and/or schools you will reach out to after the first group here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

21. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf

SECTION 3

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



KEY POINTS

- Decision-Makers are a Key Component of the Healthy School Environment
- Engaging Decision-Makers Takes Time and is a Strategic Process
- Engaging a Champion in Each School District or School
- Steps to Strategically Engage Decision-Makers
- Tools

In this section, we review key strategies to engage champions and decision-makers in schools and school districts, including preparing a pitch, meeting with each decision-maker, assessing their readiness to take on the initiative, and starting the process of securing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

➤ Decision-Makers are a Key Component of the Healthy School Environment

It is crucial to engage decision-makers at the beginning of the process of implementing a comprehensive approach to building a healthy school environment. Creating a healthy school environment may require a culture or paradigm shift for staff and students. Policies may need to be developed or revised, new classroom curriculum may be implemented, staff training may be delivered, or communications campaigns may be launched. To implement these types of comprehensive strategies and create change at this level, buy-in, approval, and communication from decision-makers is essential.

Decision-makers are also key to the sustainability of a healthy school environment. Your work within a school district or school is time-limited and it is important to have a decision-maker who is committed to implementing strategies to maintain the healthy school environment once your work is done.

➤ Engaging Decision-Makers Takes Time and is a Strategic Process

It is important to keep in mind that engaging decision-makers takes is a lengthy strategic process. It involves learning about who each decision-maker is, identifying what is important to them, so that you can describe how the healthy school environment initiative can strengthen what is important to them. This type of research and strategic thinking takes time.

Some decision-makers may be enthusiastic to take on this work. However, some may feel overwhelmed with other work or not interested in working on this initiative, and some may not even respond. There are two strategies that are important to consider when communicating with decision-makers who are hesitant about working with you. First, always thank them for their time and let them know you will check in later about working together. Secondly, be cognizant of when you need to change your approach in working with the decision maker. For example, you may need to frame the conversation in a different way: ask for a meeting via a different medium (face-to-face, phone, video conference, etc.), or engage a champion within that school district or school who may be able to assist you with engaging the decision-maker.

It also may take you some time to identify the decision-maker. At some schools, the principal will be the decision-maker you need to access, at other schools, the superintendent is the person that you really will need to create buy-in with. At some schools the vice-principal holds a lot of sway. Part of your research will be determining who in your school building is going to be able to make decisions so that you can implement a school wide strategy. This will help you determine whether you are working at the school or the district level.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

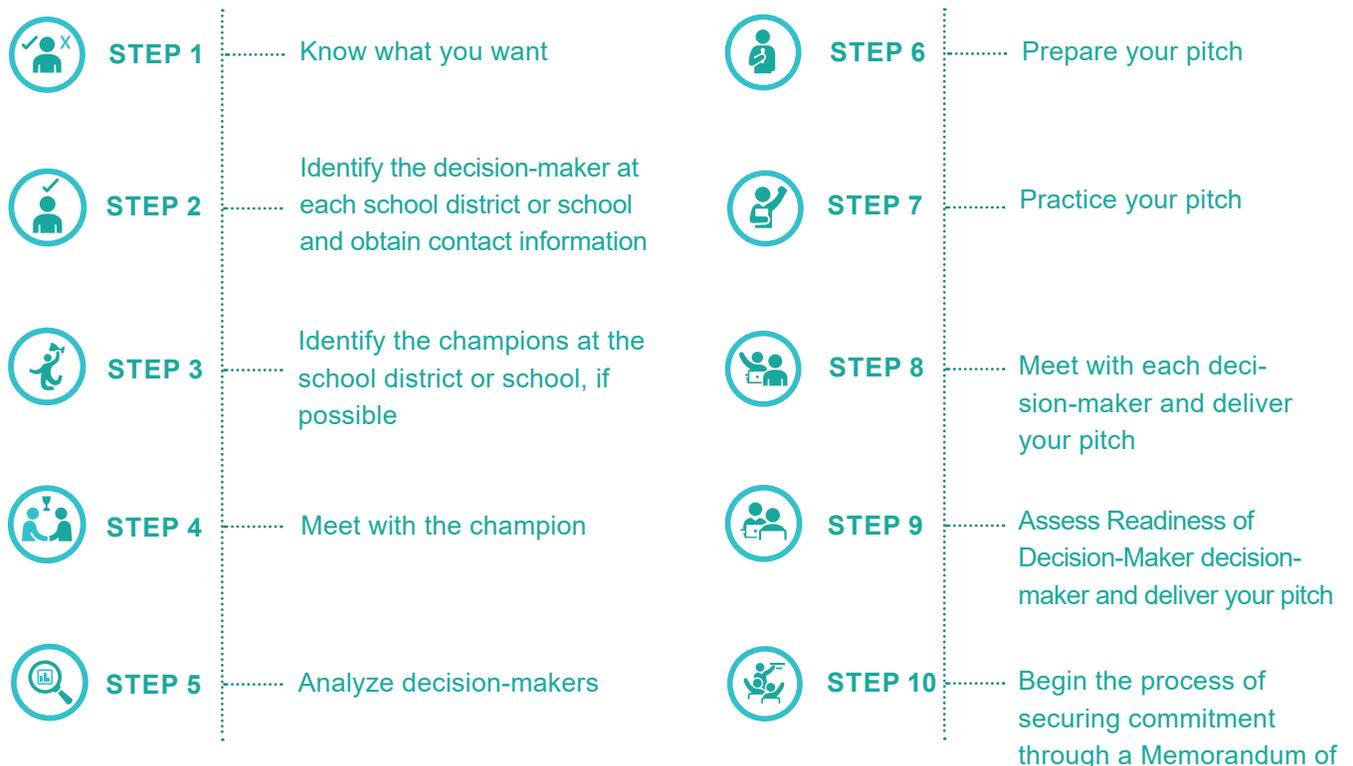
Engaging a Champion in Each School District or School

For each school district or school you work with, it is advantageous to engage a champion. A champion is someone you may know in the school district or school that is excited to do this type of work, may already be doing this type of work, and has the potential to make an impact. For example, this may be a physical education teacher at the school who has worked with you to conduct assemblies on sexual violence prevention. Also, you know that this teacher has a positive relationship with staff and students, has been a champion on other initiatives, and that staff and students in the school listen to what this teacher has to say.

Champions can help you engage decision-makers, conduct an assessment of the school district or school's prevention efforts, implement strategies, and ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

Steps to Strategically Engage Decision-Makers

To engage decision-makers you can use the following steps:



ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Step 1: Know What you Want

It is essential at the start of this process to be clear on what a healthy school environment is, why it is important, and the strategies that support it. **Tool 3.1: Strategies for a Healthy School Environment** outlines these items. It is also important to know about the six social norms that are associated with sexual violence prevention (Section 1).

Review both the strategies and the social norms so you can communicate the what, why and how of a healthy school environment clearly when meeting with decision makers.



Step 2: Identify the Decision-maker at Each School District or School and Obtain Contact Information

The decision-maker at each school district or school is most often the superintendent, but could be others such as vice superintendent, principal, or vice principal.

You can do a search online for each decision-maker's contact information.



Use **Tool 3.2: Identify Decision-Makers** to list the decision-maker for each school district or school, their contact information, and any notes about how or when to contact them.



Step 3: Identify the Champions at the School District or School, if Possible

A champion is someone in the school district or school that you may know of who is excited to do this type of work, may already be doing this type of work, and has the potential to make an impact. A champion could be a teacher, coach, guidance counselor, health team member, or another type of staff member in the school. It could also be the decision-maker.

If you know a champion, you could work with them to identify the decision-maker in step 2. If you don't know someone who could be the champion at this stage in the process, it is important to work with the decision-maker to identify one.



Use **Tool 3.3: Identify Champions** to list the champion for each school district or school and their contact information.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Step 4: Meet with the Champion

Once you've identified a champion for each school district or school, you should reach out to them to discuss:

- What the healthy school environment initiative is, why it is important, and strategies used to support the initiative (**Tool 3.1**)
- The role of the champion, which is to provide vigorous support for this initiative in different ways
- Data from past successes with the initiative that may be relevant to the school district or school (if you have already had success with other school districts or schools)

You can also ask questions to learn about:

- Why this initiative is important to them and their school or school district
- What do they see as their role
- Past work the school or school district has done that they think is important and should be continued
- Social norms that the school or school district might be most interested in addressing
- Information about the decision-maker (see Step 5: Analyze decision-makers)



Step 5: Analyze Decision-makers

The next step to engaging decision-makers is to analyze each decision-maker. This involves gathering information about each decision-maker and what is important to them, so you can think about the benefits and disadvantages of implementing the healthy school environment initiative from their perspective. This will allow you to think about how to bring some concrete ideas to the table that the decision-maker is interested in and increase the likelihood that the decision-maker will support your goals.

You learn about decision-makers by:

- Reaching out to the champion you identified and asking them about the decision-maker's priorities, as well as any priorities for the school district or school
- Searching for information about the decision-maker, school district, or school online to identify priorities
- Utilizing contacts in the community that may have information or knowledge about a decision-maker to gather additional information



Use **Tool 3.4: Analyze the Decision-Makers** to record each decision-maker, what you want from that decision-maker, and from the decision makers' point of view, what are some possible benefits of what you want from them and disadvantages of what you want from them.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

Then, for each decision-maker, use **Tool 3.5: Benefits to Decision-Makers** to analyze each benefit by noting how important the benefit is to the decision-maker and how easy it is for you to strengthen the benefit. Then you can note how you can strengthen the benefit if it is important to the decision-maker. For example, if decision-makers are interested in:

- Graduation rates: you can note that having a healthy school environment that is invested in comprehensive sexual violence prevention is shown to improve graduation rates because students feel safer and more comfortable at school
- Dress code policy: highlight how this approach can support their work on the dress code and discuss ways you can work with them on this
- Mental health: discuss how a healthy relationship curriculum that can be part of this initiative meets this need



Then, for each decision-maker, use **Tool 3.6: Disadvantages to Decision-Makers** to analyze each disadvantage to the decision-maker by noting how important the disadvantage is to the decision-maker and how easy it is for you to weaken the disadvantage.

Then you can note how you can weaken the disadvantage if it is important to the decision-maker.



Step 6: Prepare your Pitch

The next step is to prepare your pitch, or key talking points, to introduce and solidify support from the decision-maker to implement this initiative.

The talking points should focus on:

- What the healthy school environment initiative is, why it is important, and strategies used to support the initiative (**Tool 3.1**)
- How the initiative strengthens what is important to the decision-maker (**Tool 3.5**)
- How the disadvantages of implementing this initiative can be weakened (**Tool 3.6**)
- How the healthy school initiative aligns with NYS learning benchmarks
- Data from past successes with the initiative that may be relevant to the school district or school (if you have already had success with other school districts or schools)



You can use **Tool 3.7: Prepare Your Pitch** to record your key messages and talking points. **Tool 3.8: Sample Pitch** provides a sample pitch you can review.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Step 7: Practice your Pitch

The final step before meeting with each decision-maker, whether a phone call or a face-to-face meeting, is to practice the pitch. Practice saying the pitch out loud in front of a mirror or to a colleague, friend or family member. This will help you practice getting your key talking points out clearly and concisely. Decision-makers are generally busy people so being clear and concise will help build a positive relationship and increase the decision-maker's interest and motivation to work with you.



Step 8: Meet with Each Decision-maker and Deliver your Pitch

Contact each decision-maker to request a meeting. Face-to-face is preferred, but you can have a phone call if that is the only option. The goal of this meeting is to gather information and assess the decision-maker's level of readiness to commit to the initiative. If the decision-maker is ready, then you can move forward with securing commitment. If the decision-maker is not ready, then the next step is to plan a follow-up meeting with the decision-maker to discuss the initiative further.

When you meet:

- **First introduce yourself:** Share your name and your organization. You can also describe what your organization does, with a focus on how your organization works with school districts and schools. For example, if you are working at a rape crisis center, you can mention that while your organization works in sexual violence prevention, the approach you are working on is broader and involves working with schools and school districts to increase safety and overall student wellbeing
- **Ask questions:** From the beginning, it is essential to engage the decision-maker through a series of questions to really understand what's important to them. When listening, take notes and pay particular attention to which social norms the decision-maker may be interested in targeting
- **Deliver the pitch:** Once you've introduced yourself, you can deliver the pitch you prepared ([Tool 3.7](#)). When delivering your pitch, it is key to let the decision-maker share and ask questions, and for you to listen, ask questions, and build on information that the decision-maker shares about what is important and challenging for their school district or school

If appropriate, consider bringing the champion to the meeting. If you weren't able to identify a champion in step 3 because you didn't know one, you can discuss with the decision-maker who a champion could be for this work in the school district or school and identify one. The champion might be someone on staff the decision-maker has identified who has the time, capacity, and potential enthusiasm to work on this initiative.



You can use [Tool 3.9: Notes Page for Meeting with Decision-Maker](#) to take notes during the meeting.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Step 9: Assess Readiness of Decision-Maker

At the conclusion of the meeting with the decision-maker, you will have a good sense of the decision-maker's readiness to make a formal commitment to the healthy school environment initiative.

If the decision-maker is:

- **Ready to commit:** Move to Step 10 and secure a memorandum of understanding
- **Seems interested, but not ready to commit:** Secure a date for a follow-up meeting to discuss the initiative further and secure commitment
- **Not interested:** Thank the decision-maker for their time and follow up at a later date

Sometimes school districts and schools will bring you in only to fulfill requirements, not necessarily to do the real work. Even if the decision-maker has signed the MOU, they may not be fully committed to implementing a comprehensive approach. Before proceeding to the next step, it is important to ensure that there is buy-in for the initiative. You may need to have multiple meetings with the decision-maker, think strategically, and create a plan with the decision-maker to truly have commitment.



Step 10: Begin the Process of Securing Commitment Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Once the decision-maker is committed, it is important to secure commitment through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). An MOU is a formal agreement between two or more people or organizations and is used to establish official partnerships. MOUs are not legally binding, but they carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect.

An MOU can outline the purpose of the partnership, the scope of work together, roles, and responsibilities.



You can review [Tool 3.10: Sample Memorandum of Understanding](#) to see an example of an MOU you can use when working with school districts and schools.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

Tools



Tool 3.1: Strategies for a Healthy School Environment

What is the healthy school environment initiative?

A healthy school environment is one where students and staff treat one another with respect, encourage healthy relationships, promote positive examples of sexuality, and support students' mental and physical wellbeing. If any incidents affecting student safety do occur, in a healthy school environment they are addressed in a way that promotes accountability while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all staff and students.

The impact of a healthy school environment

Feeling unsafe at school has been connected to decreased academic performance, missed school, and higher dropout rates.²² In addition, sexual violence victimization has been connected to many issues, including smoking²³, alcohol and substance abuse^{24,25}, higher incidence of negative mental and physical health outcomes^{26,27}, and predisposes victims to other forms of violence.²⁸ Therefore, the reach of creating a healthy school environment extends far beyond issues relating to sexual violence and includes making an impact on student health and safety at every level.

22. HOSTILE HALLWAYS, supra note 2, at 36-38

23. Kristman-Valente, A. N., Brown, E. C., & Herrenkohl, T. I. (2013). Child physical and sexual abuse and cigarette smoking in adolescence and adulthood. *The Journal of adolescent health: official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 53(4), 533–538. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.06.003

24. Champion HL, Foley KL, DuRant RH, Hensberry R, Altman D, Wolfson M. Adolescent sexual victimization, use of alcohol and other substances, and other health risk behaviors. *J Adolescent Health*. 2004; 35(4):321–328.

25. Afifi TO, Henriksen CA, Asmundson GJ, Sareen J. Childhood maltreatment and substance use disorders among men and women in a nationally representative sample. *Can J Psychiatry*. 2012; 57(11): 677-686.

26. McFarlane J, Malecha A, Watson K, et al. Intimate partner sexual assault against women: frequency, health consequences, and treatment outcomes. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2005;105:99-108.

27. Campbell J, Jones AS, Dienemann J, Kub J, Schollenberger J, O'Campo P, Gielen AC, Wynne C. Intimate partner violence and physical health consequences. *Arch Intern Med*. 2002; 162(10):1157-1163. Available from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12020187>external icon

28. Herrera VM, McCloskey LA. Sexual abuse, family violence, and female delinquency: findings from a longitudinal study. *Violence Vict*. 2003; 18(3): 319-334.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

What are the strategies that support a healthy school environment?



Policies: Policies that support positive social norms around sexual violence are crucial to ensure proper policies are in place at all levels which will ensure the sustainability of initiatives.



Handling Disclosures (Procedures): Many schools are being held accountable by Title IX requirements around responding to incidents of sexual violence, which includes properly responding to and handling disclosures of sexual violence. Creating protective environments includes having proper and appropriate systems in place to respond quickly and effectively to incidents when they occur.



Implementing Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Interventions:

There is a growing number of programs that have shown to be effective in the reduction of sexual violence. Many of these involve individual and relationship level education, which is a crucial aspect of empowering students with tools related to the social norms highlighted in this toolkit, examples include consent programming and bystander intervention training for students.



Staff Training: Involving staff is crucial, as teachers and staff are integral parts of the school environment. Providing sexual harassment training to staff, educating staff around issues related to staff and student health, and involving staff as allies, are examples of staff involvement that promote an environment of safety for the entire community.



Engaging Parents: Parents are a critical part of a whole school environment and engaging them is an effective strategy to ensure success and sustainability of school wide change.



Communications Campaign: Media, including social media are integral aspects of changing social norms. Successful media campaigns can have a wide impact on people's beliefs and feelings and successfully promote positive social norms in schools.



Intervention of the Built Environment: Looking at the physical environment is a way to protect students in their day to day interactions. Environmental interventions have been shown effective in various forms of violence prevention^{29,30,31} and have a positive impact on student safety.

29. La Vigne NG. 1994. Rational choice and inmate disputes over phone use on Rikers Island. In *Crime Prevention Studies*, ed. RV Clarke, 3: 109– 26. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press

30. Newman O. 1996. *Creating Defensible Space*. U.S. Dep. Housing Urban Dev., Off. Policy Dev. Res. Washington, DC

31. Lasley J. 1998. "Designing Out" Gang Homicides and Street Assaults. *Natl. Inst. Justice Res. Brief, NCJ 173398*, U.S. Dep. Justice, Washington, DC

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Tool 3.5: Benefits to Decision-Makers

Worksheet

Directions:

For each decision-maker, use this tool to analyze each benefit to the decision-maker by noting how important the benefit is to the decision-maker and how easy it is for you to strengthen the benefit. Then you can note how you can strengthen the benefit if it is important to the decision-maker.

DECISION MAKER:		WHAT YOU WANT FROM THEM:		
From the decision-makers' point of view, what are some possible BENEFITS of what you're asking them to do?	From the decision-makers' point of view, how IMPORTANT is this benefit to them? 1 = least important to 5 = most important	How EASY will it be for you to strengthen this benefit for the decision-maker 1 = easy to 5 = difficult	How can you strengthen the benefit if it is important to the decision-maker?	
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Tool 3.6: Disadvantages to Decision-Makers

Worksheet

Directions:

For each decision-maker, use this tool to analyze each disadvantage to the decision-maker by noting how important the disadvantage is to the decision-maker and how easy it is for you to weaken the disadvantage. Then you can note how you can weaken the disadvantage if it is important to the decision-maker.

DECISION MAKER:		WHAT YOU WANT FROM THEM:		
From the decision-makers' point of view, what are some possible DISADVANTAGES of what you're asking them to do?	From the decision-makers' point of view, how IMPORTANT is this disadvantage to them? 1 = least important to 5 = most important	How EASY will it be for you to weaken this disadvantage for the decision-maker 1 = easy to 5 = difficult	How can you weaken the disadvantage if it is important to the decision-maker?	
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Tool 3.8: Sample Pitches

Example 1

Good Morning. My name is Adrienne Allen, and I am so pleased that you agreed to meet with me. As you may or may not know, there are many folks across New York State who are working with school districts and high schools on a concept called a Healthy School Environment. I'd love to give you a sense of some of the exciting things that are happening, but first I would like to hear a bit from you about your district, some of your successes and challenges.

In preparation for this meeting I looked at your school website and read some of the exciting things that are happening. I noticed your graduation rate has increased. You must be incredibly pleased. As part of the Healthy School Environment strategy, we are working with school districts to shift the social norms on a variety of day-to-day issues that may get in the way of students performing at their maximum capacity.

We are looking at things like bullying, sexting and texting, sexual assault incidents, the role of bystanders including students, staff and faculty and much more. We know that many of these activities are in line with the New York State Learning benchmarks that you are already working towards. We typically offer schools a menu of options that together we can talk about if they fit into your vision for your school. In some schools we are delivering evidenced based curricula to develop skills on bystander work, healthy relationships, girl empowerment and some new and exciting work is emerging around sports teams and the role of coaches.

We have been successful in working with schools across the county in looking at how they are utilizing social media to increase positive student interactions, reviewing policies, doing an environmental scan of the school property and so much more. We would work with you to design a "package" of activities that fit into your school philosophy and culture. This work is funded by a national effort through the CDC and is considered some of the cutting-edge efforts in schools.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

Tool 3.8: (Continued)

Example 2

Thanks again for the opportunity to meet with you and your team this morning. As you know, my name is Mary Johnson and my agency has been providing some level of education and workshops in your district for the past several years. Your staff and students have been very responsive, and it's been a great and rewarding experience.

I wanted to talk with you about an opportunity to enhance our work based on an effort that is going on across the state. Agencies like ours are working with school districts to build on our work and do a more comprehensive approach to changing or enhancing the social norms in schools to create a healthy school environment. Our understanding is staff, students and parents are more and more concerned about bullying, texting and sexting, using social media inappropriately, sexual assault incidents and so much more.

We also know that there are requirements at the state level to integrate some of this programming into your school. We have an opportunity to work with your school in a much more comprehensive way to make social norm changes that will have a sustainable impact on your students and your school culture.

We have had success in schools throughout the county, offering schools a wide range of activities over the course of a couple of years including evidenced based curricula, review of school policies, working with parents and students to assess attitudes, providing bystander training, reviewing how social media is used in the school and even helping staff know how to handle disclosures in a supportive way to help everyone involved. As a school that has been so interested in this work, we wanted to make you the offer first to work with you in a very strategic and comprehensive way.

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS



Tool 3.10: Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)³²

Memorandum of Understanding

Between
[NAME OF YOUR ORG)
And
[NAME OF SCHOOL]

WHEREAS, the [NAME OF YOUR ORG] and [NAME OF SCHOOL] have come together to formalize the commitment of both entities to provide trauma informed response services, policy consultation, and comprehensive prevention programming, including the implementation of a bystander intervention program.

WHEREAS, the partners herein desire to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

DESCRIPTION OF PARTNER AGENCIES

NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

[Insert Description of Organization]

NAME OF SCHOOL

[Insert Description of School]

PARTNERSHIP AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

[OUTLINE TRAINING PLAN HERE]

Project goals include:

- Implement a culturally relevant bystander intervention training to create a safer school environment
- Train pre-identified staff to be able to sustain the curriculum delivery internally
- Develop evaluation measures for both short and long-term outcomes of the training
- Reinforce positive bystander behaviors via social media campaign
- Update the School's Code of Conduct and/or other policies as needed to reflect lessons learned and meet the needs of the [NAME OF SCHOOL] community
- Environmental assessment: including an overview of the physical environment of the school, an assessment by students and staff about safe and unsafe areas, and measures to increase safety of the physical environment (e.g. adding hall monitors, lighting, or other safety measures in potentially unsafe areas)

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

Trained prevention educators, in conjunction with [NAME OF SCHOOL] who will implement bystander intervention programs with students, faculty, and staff. The success of the training will be assessed with the evaluation measures administered before and after each bystander intervention training. The partnership will also expand [NAME OF SCHOOL]'s system-wide commitment to comprehensive prevention of sexual violence and implementation of school-wide response policies.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby agreed by and between the partners as follows:

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] agree to collaborate on the implementation of a bystander intervention training program for all students, faculty, and staff at [NAME OF SCHOOL]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] agrees to provide the full array of services it has to offer to the students, faculty, and staff at [NAME OF SCHOOL].

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] agrees to the following Prevention Education activities related to the implementation of a bystander intervention program:

- LIST ACTIVITY PLAN HERE FOR GRANT/TIMELINE OF PROJECTS
- Share data reports with School demonstrating trainings provided, numbers served, and any other agreed upon training-related statistics
- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all students and staff
- Organization staff may provide the following services for sexual assault survivors, as needed:
 - Immediate crisis intervention
 - Short term counseling
 - Advocacy and support during law enforcement interaction
 - Support through medical examination and treatment process
 - Referrals to appropriate external resources

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

School 1 agrees to:

- Identify a central point of contact for [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] staff while on site
- Identify a member of staff who will help co-facilitate the bystander intervention program
- Provide access to students, faculty, and staff of School Building to collaborate on the sustainability of the bystander intervention program, including:
 - Provision of classroom and/or office/meeting space for in-person trainings and/or project planning meetings
 - Assist in the recruitment of students, faculty, and/or staff to participate in trainings
- Collaborate with the [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] to provide a framework of comprehensive sexual violence prevention and response activities
- Provide [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] printed and online materials about the Code of Conduct and other relevant policies for students and employees who have experienced an act of violence
- Inform [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] about the reporting obligations of school employees and identify those school employees with whom students can speak confidentially (and any exceptions to that confidentiality)

Representatives from the [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] and [NAME OF SCHOOL] are committed to meeting on a regular basis to utilize the strengths and resources of both entities to ensure the success and sustainability of this collaboration.

TIMELINE

The initiation of this agreement is [INSERT DATE]. This document will be reviewed by all parties on an annual basis.

TERMINATION OF THIS AGREEMENT.

This Agreement may be terminated by either party upon thirty days (30) written notice to the other party.

CONFIDENTIALITY

INSERT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

We, the undersigned have read and agree with this MOU. Further, we have reviewed the proposed project and approve it.

Authorized Official Name _____ Date _____
Title _____
Organization _____

Authorized Official Name _____ Date _____
Title _____
School Name _____

32. This sample MOU was developed by YWCA of the Niagara Frontier along with Region 6

SECTION 4

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



KEY POINTS

- The Importance of a Comprehensive Approach
- Steps to Start Your Work with School Districts and Schools
- Tools

This section outlines how to start working with schools and school districts. Elements that are discussed include: ensuring there is commitment, establishing a workgroup, and conducting an assessment of the current environment as it relates to sexual violence and other prevention efforts.

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

• The Importance of a Comprehensive Approach

To create a healthy school environment within school districts and schools, it takes more than simply changing policies or having an assembly—it requires a multi-pronged, comprehensive approach.

The strategies, that will be explored in more detail in section 5, focus on:



Policies



Handling Disclosures (Procedures)



Implementing Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Interventions



Staff Training



Engaging Parents



Communications Campaigns



Intervention of the Built Environment

This type of comprehensive approach starts with establishing a workgroup when possible to ensure this is a team-based approach and gaining an understanding of the current landscape with respect to sexual violence prevention.

This section will explore these key elements that need to be in place when starting to work with school districts and schools.

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Steps to Start Your Work with School Districts and Schools

To start working with school districts and schools, you can use the following steps:



STEP 1

Establish a workgroup for each school district or school, if possible

If possible, establish a workgroup in the school district or school. You can do this by engaging key individuals within the school district or school that will be able to provide valuable insight and feedback on the subsequent steps.

These steps include conducting activities such as assessing the current environment of the school district or school (with focus on the sexual violence landscape) and existing prevention efforts, selecting social norms to work on, selecting strategies from a menu of options, and providing feedback.

Workgroup members can be:



The champion



Health teams



Decision-makers
(superintendent, principal, etc.)



Athletics
(coaches, athletes)



Students



Volunteers at the school



Teachers



Other student groups such as
LGBTQ groups



Parents



You can use **Tool 4.1: Establish a Workgroup** to record workgroup members for each school district or school.

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



STEP 2

Assess the current environment

Once you have a workgroup established, you can begin working with them on the assessment step. The assessment will look at what has been done in the past and currently to support a healthy school environment.

The assessment will:



Give you and the workgroup a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of policies, procedures, past/current efforts, curriculum, and the built environment, all related to promoting a healthy school environment



Help identify the social norm(s) to target and other key areas to focus on



Use the selected social norm(s) key areas to inform the strategies that will be selected and



Provide a baseline from which to measure the impact of the strategies

When it comes to conducting the assessment, you will focus on providing knowledge and assistance to the workgroup to support them as you plan to conduct the assessment. You will also ensure that enough data is being collected to set the stage for selecting strategies, which will be discussed in the following sections.



Tool 4.2: Healthy School Environment Assessment is a tool you can use to assess the school environment. It is important to complete the assessment with the decision-maker, champion, and workgroup if you have one assembled. The assessment will likely need to be completed over time (for example, one to two weeks).

You can also use **Tool 4.3: Data Collection with The School Community** and **Tool 4.4: Writing Good Questions for Interviews or Focus Groups** for guidance around collecting data while conducting the assessment.

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Tool 4.2: Healthy School Environment Assessment

Before selecting social norm(s) to focus on and strategies to support the healthy school environment initiative, it is important to conduct an assessment. The assessment will look at what the school has done in the past and what they are currently doing to support a healthy school environment.

The assessment should be completed with the decision-maker, champion, and work-group. The assessment will likely need to be completed over time. For example, you might need to meet with the decision-maker various times, as well as champions and workgroups, to get a thorough understanding of each aspect of the assessment. This might take place over 3-4 meetings between you and various stakeholders, using the assessment to guide your questions. It is also important to elicit information from the community (staff and students). At the end of this chapter, we review different forms of data collection to engage the community. You may want to conduct several interviews and possibly a focus group with students and staff. See [Tool 4.3: Writing Good Interview and Focus Group Questions](#).

Note: Before beginning the assessment, it is important to understand that there are Federal, State and Title IX laws already in place that affect school districts and schools. The elements of these laws constitute the minimum sexual violence policy for any New York school district and school. Part of these laws mandates that a Title IX coordinator is selected for each district. This is a point person for handling Title IX complaints, and who is in this position varies by district. Finding out who is the appointed Title IX coordinator and their duties is a good step in your information gathering process. While this toolkit is focused on prevention, having in place policies around response and dissemination of those policies is part of prevention initiatives. The healthy school environment initiative intends for school districts to better respond to incidents, but also for schools to go beyond this minimum.

These minimums are:

- Mandated reporting laws
- Title IX requirements
- School Policy for responding to illegal activity on school grounds (i.e. assault, violence)
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

Directions:

Use the tables on the following several pages to collect data in each of the eight areas:

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidents
- Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Curriculum
- Built Environments
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

For each area, there are specific questions to consider and suggested data sources and collection methods.

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

POLICIES

What to Assess

- What school policies are in place related to a healthy school environment (texting, sexting, bullying, weapons, sexual violence, etc.)?
 - What policies are in place on school grounds?
 - What policies are in place regarding physical health?
 - What policies are in place regarding social and emotional health?
 - What policies are in place for other places (buses, extra-curricular activities, field trips, sporting events, etc.)?
- What school policies are in place related to disclosures?
- How are policies communicated?
- How are policies enforced?
- What is involved in the policy process?
 - What is the process for improving existing policies? Who is involved?
 - What is the process for promoting and enacting new policies? Who is involved?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Review school handbook
- Interview key staff
- Conduct surveys
- Review school/district website
- Look at available online sample school policies³³
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

33. <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/pdf/AppA.pdf>

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

DISCLOSURE PROCEDURES

What to Assess

- What are the procedures when a sexual violence incident is disclosed to a staff person?
- How are these procedures communicated to staff?
- How are these procedures communicated to students?
- How do staff and students feel about these procedures (are they effective)?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Review school handbook
- Review school/district website
- Interview key staff
- Conduct surveys
- Review Sample Policies³⁴
- Google search

34. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/ovw/page/file/900716/download>

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

STAFF ROLES

What to Assess

- Who are the key staff in relation to:
 - Conducting past or current healthy school environment work (e.g., texting, sexting, bullying, weapons, sexual violence, etc.)?
 - Accepting disclosures (i.e. who do students make disclosures to)?
 - Working with students/staff after a disclosure is made (e.g. counseling, using a trauma-informed care approach)?
 - Modeling bystander behavior?
 - Who is the Title IX Coordinator?
 - What are this person's responsibilities?
 - Note: Typically, there is one per district, who may or may not have any role in sexual violence prevention.

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Interview key staff
- Conduct surveys
- Observations
- Review school/district website
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

SEXUAL VIOLENCE INCIDENTS

What to Assess

- How many sexual violence incidents (including sexual harassment, sexting, bullying) have been reported?
 - What happened?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- District report card
- YRBSS data
- Interview key staff
- Review school/district website
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION CURRICULUM

What to Assess

- Does the school have a sexual health education curriculum in place? (If so, answer the questions below)
- What are the goals and objectives of the sexual health education curriculum?
- Is it considered a comprehensive sexual health education curriculum? (see tool related to comprehensive sexual health education)³⁵
- What are the strengths of the curriculum in terms of creating a healthy school environment
- What are the areas of improvement in terms of creating a healthy school environment

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Interview key staff
- Interview students or conduct student focus groups
- Review school/district website
- Review current curriculum (if any)
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

35. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/ovw/page/file/900716/download>

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

What to Assess

- Where have sexual violence incidents occurred in the past?
- Where are areas that have less surveillance or where more incidents of any type occur?
- What staff work in the areas where sexual violence incidents have occurred or are potentially dangerous (e.g., parking lots, busses, etc.)?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Hot-spot mapping with students
- Hot-spot mapping with staff
- Interview students and staff
- Review school/district website
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

SOCIAL NORMS

What to Assess

- What kind of work, including marketing (i.e. posters) or education, if any, has the school or school district done around the following topics:
 - Teaching consent?
 - Bystander intervention?
 - Empathy and emotional health?
 - Healthy relationships?
 - Healthy masculinity/gender expectations?
 - Celebrating diversity/respect for others?
- What are the lessons learned from the work that has been done around those topics?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Interview key staff
- Conduct focus groups or interviews with students
- Conduct surveys
- Observations
- Review school/district website
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Tool 4.2: (Continued)

HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT EFFORTS (PAST AND CURRENT)

What to Assess

- What has been done in the past or currently to promote a healthy school environment?
 - Revision of policies related to texting, sexting, bullying, weapons, sexual violence, etc.?
 - Communication campaigns?
 - Assemblies?
 - Staff training?
 - Student bystander intervention training?
 - Parent engagement?
 - Environmental interventions?
- For past and current efforts, what have been the:
 - Strengths?
 - Outcomes?
 - Areas of improvement?
 - Lessons learned?

Notes

Data Collection Sources and Methods

- Interview key staff
- Conduct focus groups or interviews with students
- Conduct surveys
- Review school/district website
- Google search (news articles, etc.)

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Tool 4.3: Data Collection with The School Community

Listed below are some data collection methods that are commonly used when eliciting information from the community. As you read through these methods, think about what sort of method would best suit the information you need to gain from your assessment.

Interviews:

An interview is a research method designed to improve your understanding of how someone else thinks about a topic. During the interview, the person being interviewed is considered the expert. The interviewer uses powerful questioning and good listening skills to learn as much as possible from the person being interviewed to understand their perspective. One person is interviewed at a time. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, over the phone, through FaceTime or Skype. Before the interview, the interviewer prepares by reviewing the interview guidelines and questions. They also schedule the interview and prepare materials, equipment, and space needed for the interview. See **Tool 4.4 Writing Good Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups.**

Focus Groups

One or two researchers identify and invite several people (6-12) to meet as a group to discuss a given topic. The purpose of a focus group discussion is to enable participants to share and discuss their different views on a topic. Focus group discussions work best when conducted by two researchers. One researcher leads the discussion and the other researcher takes detailed notes during the discussion. The researcher who leads the discussion is responsible for asking all the questions listed in a focus group question guide, keeping the discussion on track, and encouraging all group members to share. The note-taker is primarily responsible for taking detailed notes of the discussion. See **Tool 4.4 Writing Good Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups.**

Surveys:

A set of questions is distributed to an entire group, or sample, of individuals to collect their thoughts on a topic. Surveys can be done through a printed questionnaire, over the telephone, by mail, in person, or online (e.g., SurveyMonkey).

Observation:

Researchers observe community members in their usual settings to gain an understanding of what they do and how they behave as it occurs in the “real world.”

STARTING YOUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Tool 4.4: Writing Good Questions for Interviews or Focus Groups

5 Steps for Writing Questions:

- 1 Develop a preliminary list of questions in a freeform, brainstorming fashion
- 2 As a working group, review the questions' wording, ordering, and relevance
- 3 Revise the list of questions and reduce the number of questions to 8-12
- 4 If possible, pilot or pre-test the questions with a group of people (for focus group) or individual (interview)
- 5 Revisit your project goals as necessary throughout this process!

Good Questions Checklist:

- ✓ Sound conversational and use words and concepts participants would use
- ✓ Are easy to understand, clear, and short
- ✓ Are one-dimensional and not double-barreled (they ask about one thing only)
- ✓ Can't be answered with a simple yes or no
- ✓ Are non-threatening and wouldn't embarrass participants
- ✓ Are ordered from general to more specific
- ✓ Are open-ended!

Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. They should be designed to elicit a complex thought, opinion, or perception from a participant. Their purpose is to get a rich conversation started. Some good ways to begin an open-ended question include:

- How did you feel...
- What did you think about...
- What do you like best about...
- What problems do you see...
- How did you...

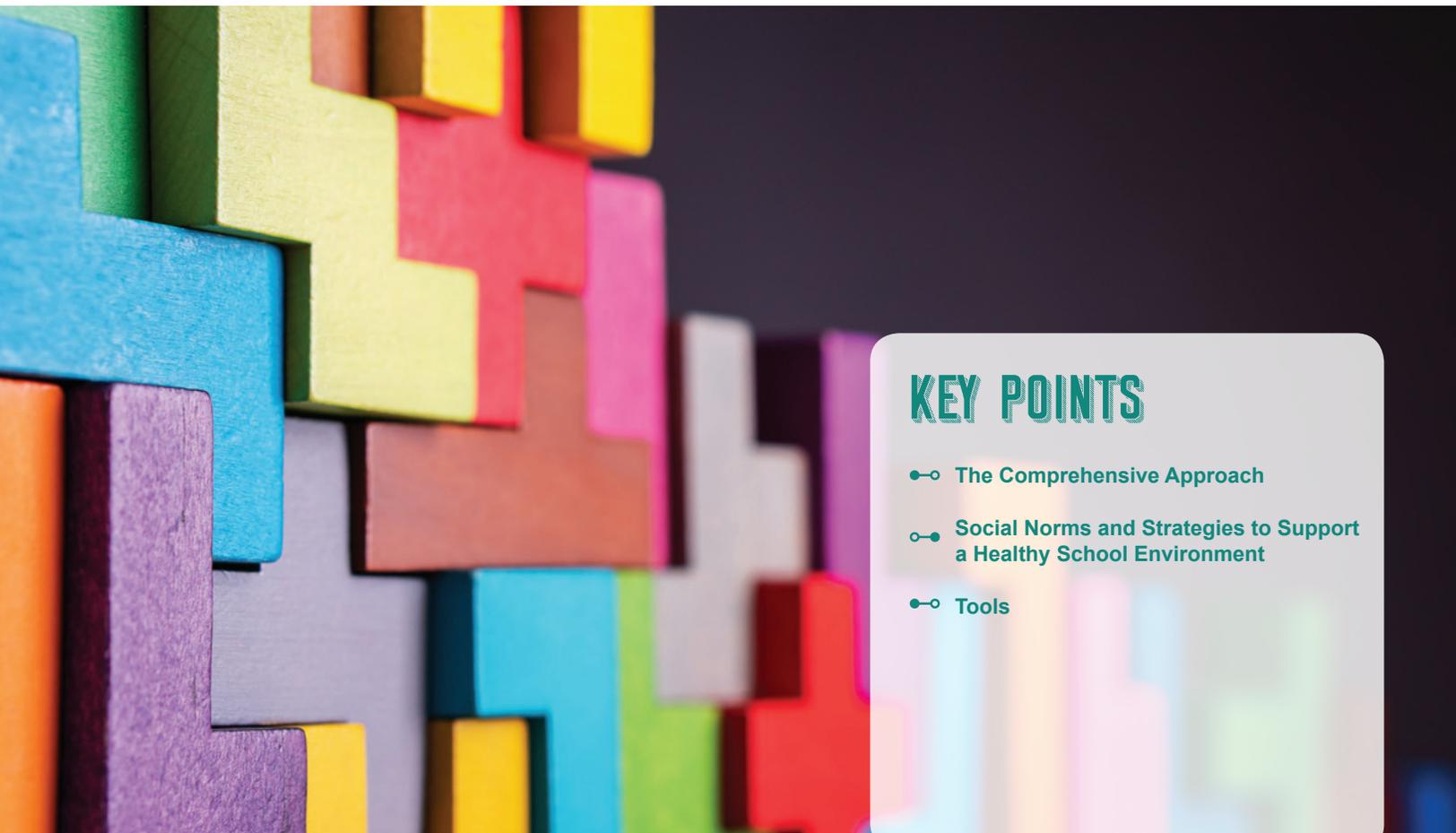
While you want to ask questions that will stir up dialogue, you want to avoid asking "why". This can leave a conversation too open and the lack of specificity may cause people to go off topic.

Probes are ways to elicit information that participants fail to disclose in an answer. They are ways to nudge participants into speaking about a topic further. Some common probes include:

- What else can you say about that?
- Can you give me an example?
- Can someone build on that?
- Can you tell me more about how you felt about X?
- Why do you think you feel this way?
- What does X word mean to you?

SECTION 5

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



KEY POINTS

- The Comprehensive Approach
- Social Norms and Strategies to Support a Healthy School Environment
- Tools

This section reviews strategies to support a healthy school environment. Here you will learn how to work with schools and school districts on selecting the best strategies based on the assessment they conducted and the social norms they selected.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

→ The Comprehensive Approach

Once you have secured commitment from the decision-maker, established a team, and conducted the assessment, you can now work with decision-makers, champions and teams on the social norms to address and implement the strategies that are the right fit for the school district or school.

School districts and schools must implement multiple strategies to have a comprehensive approach to promoting a healthy school environment and to impact the social norms they want to address. Without using a comprehensive approach, there won't be real change that is sustainable.

→ Social Norms and Strategies to Support a Healthy School Environment

To select the most appropriate social norms and the best strategies to create a healthy school environment in each school district or school, you can use the following steps:



STEP 1

Gather research on school districts & schools

For each of the areas of focus you did in previous section (**Tool 4.2: Healthy School Environment Assessment**), review the data that you collected with the workgroup. Discuss your findings and make notes about whether that is an area of priority for the school or school district you are working with to assess. This analysis will inform the social norms and the best strategies to select.



Use **Tool 5.1: Assessment Analysis** to record notes from the workgroup's discussion and analysis of each area of the assessment.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



STEP 2

Identify social norms to work on

To successfully make a school safer and therefore prevent violence and other issues affecting students, *the CDC Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence* has highlighted promoting social norms that protect against violence as a key strategy. The NYS DOH has highlighted six social norms, which are based on risk and protective factors related to sexual violence and based on common social norms that Regional Centers were working on.

These social norms impact one another and may work in synergy. However, because we don't have the resources to tackle all simultaneously, it is important to work with the workgroup to identify one or two of these social norms. The workgroup should use information gathered in the assessment to highlight priority areas, which will help inform the social norms that are important for the school or school district to work on.

Recall from Section 1 that the six social norms are:

- 1 **Supporting and Affirming Consent**
- 2 **Active Bystander Behaviors**
- 3 **Empathy and Emotional Health**
- 4 **Healthy Relationships**
- 5 **Healthy Masculinity/gender Expectations**
- 6 **Celebrating Diversity/respect for Others**



You can use the analysis of the assessment and then **Tool 5.2: Social Norms** to record the social norms that each school district and school you are working with want to focus on.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



STEP 3

Select strategies to work on

Once you have analyzed the data collected and selected social norms to focus on, you will work with workgroups on selecting strategies to address areas of priority. The strategies are:



Policies



Handling Disclosures (Procedures)



Implementing Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Interventions



Staff Training



Engaging Parents



Communications Campaigns



Intervention of the Built Environment



Tool 5.3: Guidance for Selecting Strategies describes each of the strategies listed above, highlights the areas from the assessment each strategy addresses, and the social norms that the strategies most impact. This tool also provides key tips for each strategy that schools and school districts can use if that strategy is selected.

Then, *for each priority area* identified in **Tool 5.1: Assessment Analysis**, use **Tool 5.4: Strategies Selection Tool** to record the strategies that the school district or school will implement to address that priority area. You can record notes about each specific strategy. For example, if policy is selected you can record which policies are priorities.



STEP 4

Develop an implementation plan

Once you have selected strategies to work on, you will develop an implementation plan for each strategy. How to do this will be outlined in detail in the next section.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tools



Tool 5.1: Assessment Analysis

Directions:

For each of the areas to assess, review the data that you collected with the workgroup. Discuss your findings and make notes about whether that is an area of priority for the school or school district you are working with you.

AREA THAT WAS ASSESSED	NOTES FROM DATA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION	IS THIS A PRIORITY AREA TO ADDRESS? (✓)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policies 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disclosure Procedures 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff Roles 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sexual Violence Incidence (Including Sexual Harassment, Sexting) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence-Informed/ Evidence-Based Education Curriculum that is Related to the Social Norms? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Built Environments 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social Norms 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current) 		

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



Tool 5.2: Social Norms

The goal of creating a healthy environment is to promote social norms, which the CDC highlights as a key focus area in the prevention of sexual violence. It is important to work with workgroups to identify one or two of these social norms. Use the assessment analysis and priorities identified by the team to select the social norms.

Directions:

Use the chart below to review each of the social norms and record the one or two social norm(s) selected by each school district and/or school building as the focus of their healthy school environment initiative.

School District or School Name: _____

NORMS	DESCRIPTION	SELECTED (✓)
Supporting and affirming consent	Most people know that sexual violence means lack of consent. However, what constitutes consent is often misunderstood by young people and adults alike. Many conversations around consent will involve discussions of healthy sexuality but can also be translated to other aspects of student health. Therefore, promoting positive social norms around consent increases safety both inside and outside the classroom.	
Active bystander behaviors	A bystander intervention describes incidents when someone who is not directly involved in a situation steps in and helps. Bystander intervention has been shown to decrease many forms of violence, from bullying and harassment, to sexual aggression and violence. Teaching skills to prevent violence is a focus area put forth by CDC. Bystander intervention skills are learnable techniques that promote student safety and encourage a shared understanding of community safety and responsibility.	
Empathy and emotional health	Encouraging empathy for others as well as overall emotional health of students has been shown as a protective factor against sexual violence. Encouraging empathy of students and supporting programs and learning environments that are protective of emotional health, not only prevent violence, but support the overall health of the child, and can promote prosocial behaviors that positively impact the environment at multiple levels.	

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.2: (Continued)

NORMS	DESCRIPTION	SELECTED (✓)
Healthy relationships	Experts agree that providing students with skills that promote relationship building and emphasize the care and wellbeing of others, sets the path for healthier relationships in the future. Research shows that healthy relationship education teaches skills that protects students from sexual assault in high school and beyond. Healthy relationship education also encourages skills that are translatable to student academic and professional success.	
Healthy masculinity/gender expectations	Rigid gender norms have been shown to foster various forms of violence and other issues that negatively impact school environments, such as homophobia and transphobia. Interventions that address these factors, such as promoting healthy masculinities, and empowering girls and women, have been shown to prevent various forms of violence, and create healthy and safe environments for all genders and sexual orientations. In addition, creating initiative that empowers girls and women is highlighted by CDC as one of the four focus areas to effectively prevent against sexual violence.	
Celebrating diversity/respect for others	We know that diverse social circles are a protective factor against violence. Also, understanding how race, gender, and economic factors impact violence and other issues affecting students as well as promoting school diversity by supporting programs and initiatives that support racial and economic justice are effective in creating a healthy environment for all members of the community regardless of gender and/or socioeconomic status.	

Notes

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



Tool 5.3: Guidance for Selecting Strategies

At this point in the process, you have conducted the assessment, and analyzed the assessment to identify priority areas and social norm(s) to focus on. Now, schools and school districts need to select strategies that they will implement to address their selected priority areas and social norms.

Note:

It is a requirement of the RPE program that each regional center work in four of the areas listed below: 1. policy, 2. environmental intervention, 3. implementing evidence-informed/evidence-based interventions and 4. communications or marketing campaign. This does not mean you have to begin implementing all of these at once! But it is important to remember these areas of focus when selecting strategies.

The key strategies to create a healthy school environment are:



Policies and Procedures*



Handling Disclosures



Implementing Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Interventions*



Staff Training



Engaging Parents



Communications and Marketing Campaign*



Environmental Intervention*

The following pages describes each of these key strategies in detail and highlights the areas from the assessment that each strategy can best address.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



POLICIES

Description

Policies and procedures that support positive social norms around sexual violence are crucial to ensure proper policies are in place at all levels which will ensure the sustainability of initiatives.

Social Norms Addressed: 1. Supporting and affirming consent; 2. Active bystander behaviors; 3. Empathy and emotional health; 4. Healthy relationships; 5. Healthy masculinity/gender expectation; and 6. Celebrating diversity/respect for others.

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidence
- Evidence-Informed and Evidence-Based Curriculum
- Built Environments
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Review language in existing policies in student handbook, student code of conduct, and staff/faculty codes of conduct
- Review laws and policies related to sexual violence, such as Title IX requirements in your school, mandated reporting policies, and other schoolwide policies related to violence
- Review current 'practices' that could be turned into written policy, i.e. staff training on disclosure, integrating a policy that all students receive bystander training, etc

Tips

- ✓ Policies can be a scary word to decision-makers, so you can use other words like procedures, codes of conduct, etc
- ✓ Each school/district handles policy change differently, work with the decision-maker on how to review and offer suggestions for policy change
- ✓ Policies can focus on:
 - Disclosures (reporting)
 - Staff roles
 - Sexual education curriculum

Key Resources

Community Toolbox: Changing Policies in Schools: Step by step instructions on how to change school policies.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/changing-policies/school-policies/main>

Sample School Policies from the Department of Education: Sample school policies from across the country. <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OCR/archives/pdf/AppA.pdf>

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



HANDLING DISCLOSURES

Description

Many schools are being held accountable by Title IX requirements around responding to incidents of sexual violence, which includes properly responding to and handling disclosures of sexual violence. Creating protective environments includes having proper and appropriate systems in place to respond quickly and effectively to incidents when they occur. Putting adequate systems in place to respond to disclosures and providing general staff resources is part of a good prevention plan; however, responding to/handling disclosures and/or providing TA on specific disclosures is outside of the scope of RPE work because the main focus is not prevention. This information is included here because as part of a healthy school environment, you will ensure that proper policies are in place and provide connections to resources in the community to enhance these policies and procedures.

Social Norms Addressed: Supporting and affirming consent; Active bystander behaviors.

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidence
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Review current systems in place regarding disclosures and improve them
- Identify 'key staff' that may be a point of contact for handling disclosures, such as counselors, school nurses, health teachers, etc
- Conduct staff training related to handling disclosures, especially with key staff

Key Resources

White House Task Force: Considerations for School District Sexual Misconduct Policy: Key considerations for implementing a sexual misconduct policy at the school district level.
<https://www.justice.gov/archives/ovw/page/file/900716/download>

Title IX Resource Guide: Comprehensive guide by the U.S. Department of Education on Title IX: Guide that enhances your understanding of Title IX and what it means in the context of schools.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-title-ix-coordinators-guide-201504.pdf>

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Training Guide for Administrators and Educators on "Addressing Adult Sexual Misconduct in the School Setting".
<https://rems.ed.gov/docs/ASMTTrainingGuide.pdf>

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Description

There is a growing number of programs that have shown to be effective in the reduction of sexual violence. Many of these involve individual and relationship level education, which is a crucial aspect of empowering students with tools related to the social norms. Some curriculum also will include components that address different levels of the social ecological model. For example, some curriculum incorporates hotspot mapping or a communications campaign. Evidence-informed and evidence-based interventions include consent programming and bystander intervention training for students.

Note: It is a requirement of the RPE program that all programs utilized are at a minimum evidence-informed curriculum, which means it has been evaluated in some way or that the design of the intervention is informed by evidence based practices. You also might hear the term evidence-based which refers to curricula that has been evaluated using a stricter set of research criteria. To know if the curriculum you select is acceptable, always refer to the DOH provided list of approved programs (see key resources below).

Social Norms Addressed: 1. Supporting and affirming consent; 2. Active bystander behaviors; 3. Empathy and emotional health; 4. Healthy relationships; 5. Healthy masculinity/gender expectation; and 6. Celebrating diversity/respect for others.

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidents
- Evidence-Informed/Evidence-Based Interventions
- Built Environments
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Review the list of approved curricula provided by the Department of Health
- Review resources in school devoted to implementing evidence-informed/evidence-based interventions and how
- Determine what programs address the social norms that you have highlighted to work on in your school/district
- Determine what kind of licensing and training is necessary to utilize Intervention in your school

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)

Tips

- ✓ Some evidence-informed and/or evidence-based interventions have licensing requirements that make it difficult to train the curriculum, this should be considered when identifying curriculum
- ✓ Some evidence-informed and/or evidence-based interventions have components that look at school policy or incorporate marketing campaign, which can be useful for use in your initiative

Key Resources

New York State Department of Health provided List of Acceptable Programs: Please refer to the list of acceptable programs which will be available on the New York State Department of Health Website and disseminated to regional coordinators.

https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/sexual_violence/education_program.htm

CDC: Prevention Strategies for Sexual Violence Prevention: Contains strategies and list of promising and evidence-informed and evidence-based programming.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/prevention.html>

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



Staff Training

Description

Involving staff is crucial, as teachers and staff are integral parts of the school environment. Providing sexual harassment training to staff, educating staff around issues related to staff and student health, and involving staff as allies and implementers, are examples of staff involvement that promote an environment of safety for the entire community and create sustainability.

Social Norms Addressed: 1. Supporting and affirming consent; 2. Active bystander behaviors; 3. Empathy and emotional health; 4. Healthy relationships; 5. Healthy masculinity/gender expectation; and 6. Celebrating diversity/respect for others.

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidents
- Evidence-Informed/Evidence-Based Interventions
- Built Environments
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Recruit and secure commitment from a teacher (e.g. health teacher) that they will educate students on sexual violence prevention, how to screen for sexual violence, etc
- Provide a Staff Disclosure Training
- Provide training to staff on social norms (such as bystander intervention training)
- Work with staff to implement student training (train alongside school staff, help school staff get certified to train relevant evidence-informed/evidence-based interventions)
- Provide a Staff Sexual Harassment Training (mandated by state)
- Work with faculty groups (i.e. work with the union if applicable)
- Train staff at all levels around sexual violence prevention (such as hall monitors, janitors, receptionists, etc.) – a healthy school environment includes everyone!

Tips

- ✓ It is important to understand who key staff are and their potential responsibility
- ✓ Engaging staff at every level in some capacity is important, such as front desk staff, hall monitors, etc
- ✓ It's important to determine what staff groups and organizations exist, such as unions
- ✓ Engage staff in programming to students. Have staff attend student programming, become co-facilitators, and eventually facilitate curriculum on their own

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



Engaging Parents

Description

Parents are a critical part of a whole school environment and engaging them is an effective strategy to ensure success and sustainability of school wide change. Certain initiatives in schools have started due to parent involvement and will. Understanding how the parent population is engaged in the school is critical in understanding how you can include parents in your healthy school environment initiative.

Social Norms Addressed: 1. Supporting and affirming consent; 2. Active bystander behaviors; 3. Empathy and emotional health; 4. Healthy relationships; 5. Healthy masculinity/gender expectation; and 6. Celebrating diversity/respect for others

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Sexual Violence Incidents
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Provide resources for Parents such as a *toolkit for parents*
- Conduct a presentation at a PTA meeting

Key Resources

Ending K-12 Sexual Harassment: Toolkit for Parents and Allies: This toolkit is designed by Stop Sexual Assault in Schools, a parent led organization aimed at creating resources to intervene in schools.

https://stopsexualassaultinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SSAIS_FINAL.pdf

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



Communications Campaign

Description

Media, including social media and marketing campaigns (posters, notices on school announcements, etc.) are integral aspects of changing social norms. Successful media and marketing campaigns can have a wide impact on people's beliefs and feelings and successfully promote positive social norms in schools.

Social Norms Addressed: 1. Supporting and affirming consent; 2. Active bystander behaviors; 3. Empathy and emotional health; 4. Healthy relationships; 5. Healthy masculinity/gender expectation; and 6. Celebrating diversity/respect for others

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Policies
- Disclosure Procedures
- Staff Roles
- Sexual Violence Incidents
- Evidence-Informed/Evidence-Based Interventions
- Built Environments
- Social Norms
- Healthy School Environment Efforts (Past and Current)

Checklist

- Before implementing a communication, identify target audience
- Select messages strategically (new policies, messaging that impacts social norms)
- Select messages that emphasize the social norm you are targeting
- Utilize evidence-informed/evidence-based marketing campaigns when possible
- If creating own media campaign, incorporate input from 'target audience', such as students
- Select mediums for messages (posters, fact sheets, social media, morning announcements, etc.)
- If using social media, use targeted 'geo-fenced' marketing

Key Resources

Community Toolbox: Developing a Plan for Communication: This toolkit outlines how to plan a communications plan.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/communication-plan/main>

Community Toolbox: Implementing Social Marketing: This toolkit assists in developing a social marketing effort to promote adoption and use of innovations.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/implement-social-marketing-effort>

An overview of the Social Norms Approach by Alan Berkowitz: This guide defines what a social norms approach is, how it can be used as part of marketing campaign, and overviews how to develop and implement a social norms approach in your community.

<http://www.alanberkowitz.com/articles/social%20norms%20approach-short.pdf>

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Tool 5.3: (Continued)



Intervention of the Built Environment

Description

Assessing the physical environment is a way to protect students in their day to day interactions. Environmental interventions have been proven effective in various forms of violence prevention and can have a positive impact on student safety.

Social Norm Addressed: 1. Active bystander behaviors; 2. Gender expectations

Areas from Assessment Addressed

- Physical Space (Including the school buildings, hallways, classrooms, stairwells, school grounds, and any spaces that students go on school time off campus (bus trips, sports fields, common field trip locations, etc.))
- Policies around physical space
- Policies and procedures regarding monitoring (hall monitors schedule/areas where there is not adult supervision)
- Policies and procedures around lighting in the building

Checklist

- Survey the school environment for environmental factors that:
 - Make it easier to perpetrate violence
 - Reinforce social norms that condone violence
 - Make it harder to surveil (i.e. dark hallways, areas that are unmonitored, or areas known to be where incidents occur)
 - Make it hard to intervene
- Perform 'hot spot mapping' activity with students and staff
- Ensure there are adequate facilities, such as single stalled bathrooms available to students who feel unsafe in gendered bathrooms

Tips

- ✓ Consider environmental aspects that reinforce positive social norms
- ✓ Environmental interventions may work in synergy with marketing campaigns and used to inform where students are most likely to receive messaging

Key Resources

Shifting Boundaries Hotspot Mapping Tool: The shifting boundaries curriculum is available online and contains an intervention of the built environment activity located on pages 18-25 and pages 57-62.

<https://www.wcwoonline.org/images/stories/projects/datingviolence/ShiftingBoundaries-Fall2018.pdf>

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Guidebook: This guidebook is designed to help individuals understand how to reduce crime through environmental changes. The checklist on page 29 may be especially useful for creating own checklist.

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Mobile_docs/CPTED-Guidebook.pdf

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



Tool 5.4: Strategies Selection Tool

Directions:

For each priority area identified in Tool 5.1: Assessment Analysis, use the chart below to record the strategies that the school district or school will implement to address that area. You can use Tool 5.3: Guidance for Selecting Strategies to determine the best strategies to address each priority area. You can record notes about each specific strategy, for example, if policy is selected you can record which policies the school has selected as part of their work.

School District or School Name: _____

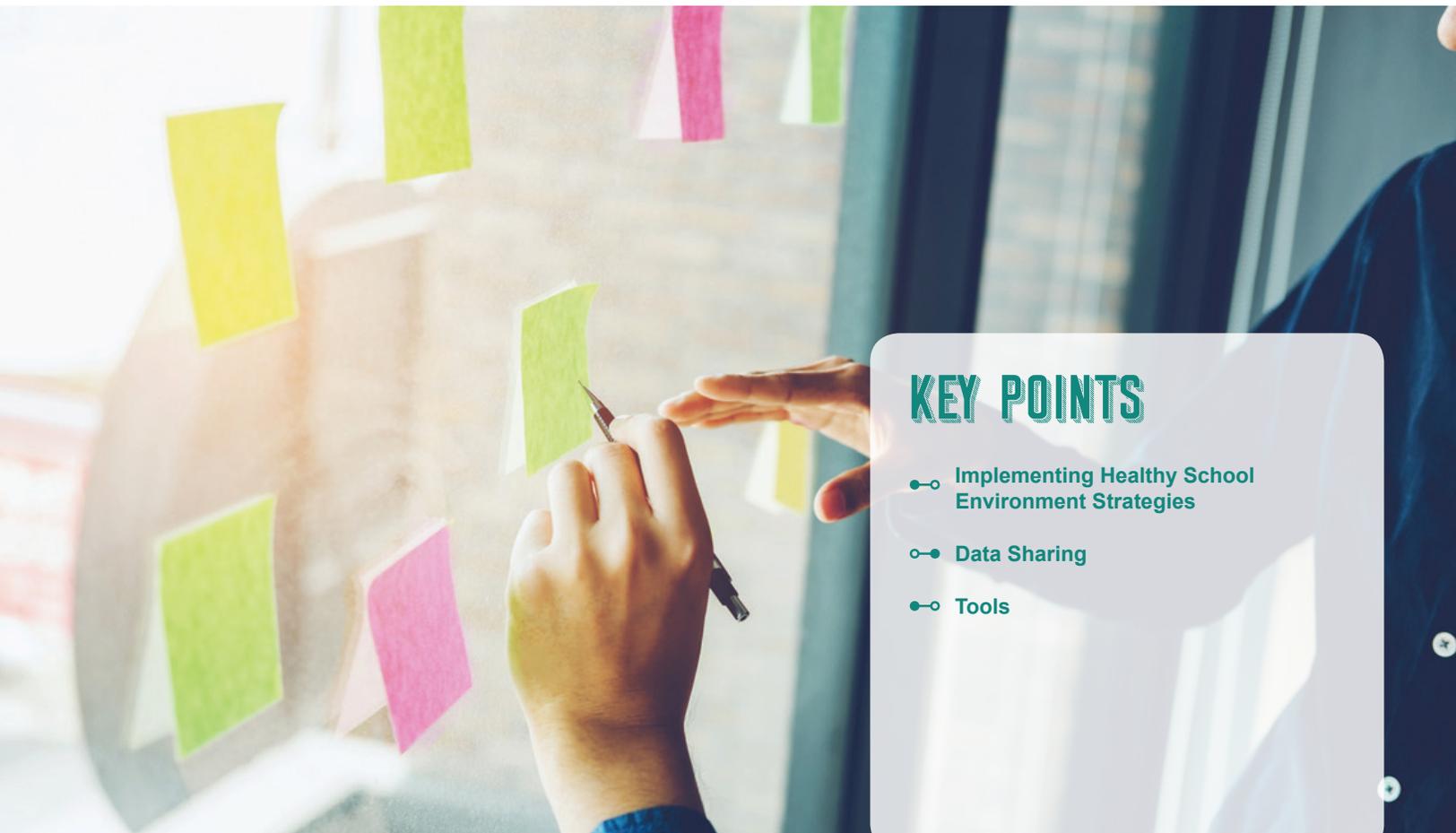
Social Norm(s) Selected: _____

Priority Area: _____

STRATEGIES (FROM TOOL 5.3)	NOTES

SECTION 6

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



KEY POINTS

- Implementing Healthy School Environment Strategies
- Data Sharing
- Tools

This section outlines how to develop an implementation plan for each selected strategy from Section 5. The implementation plan includes:

- 1 **Activities**
- 2 **Person(s) responsible**
- 3 **Team members**
- 4 **Timelines**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

↪ Implementing Healthy School Environment Strategies

Implementing comprehensive strategies for sexual violence prevention in school districts and schools requires a well-thought out plan. For each strategy selected, an implementation plan needs to be developed and it should include:

- 1 **Activities**
- 2 **Person(s) responsible**
- 3 **Team members**
- 4 **Timelines**

For each strategy and the associated activities, it is important to think about the following elements and make them their own activities:

- ✓ **Communication plan:** In this you will consider how will you communicate with the key stakeholders on this initiative. What will be your primary method of communication? (phone, in person, email). Who is the point person organizing meetings? How often will you meet with key stakeholders?
- ✓ **Enforcement plan:** For your enforcement plan you will consider how will you ensure that the work that is put forth in the MOU is followed? If goals are not met and outlined progress goals are not followed, what are the next steps and actions?
- ✓ **Assessment/monitoring/evaluation plan:** Here you will you measure success of the initiative. It is recommended that you monitor and report regularly about progress with the school in each of the strategies you are working in. It is important to plan what tools will you use to regularly monitor progress and create a plan to share progress with key stakeholders in your school or district



You can use **Tool 6.1: Implementation Plan** to develop an implementation plan for each strategy selected from the menu in Section 5

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

→ Data Sharing

When implementing the strategies to create a healthy school environment, it is important to collect data that you can share with decision-makers to further secure commitment and buy in. Data can also be used to share with other school districts and schools when recruiting them to come on board. We will explore how you can use data to promote success and recruit other school districts and schools in the next section.

Data you can collect includes pre- and post-tests from any educational interventions you administer. It can also be school wide surveys of students or staff around marketing material, or any other new interventions, to better understand community perspectives on the initiative. It could also be the data collected during focus groups or interviews with staff and students during your assessment of the school. If performing the hotspot environmental intervention, this would be important data to share back to leadership. These are just a few examples of different kinds of surveys or feedback you can elicit from community members to share back with leadership to demonstrate both buy-in and success.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Tools



Tool 6.1: Implementation Plan

Directions:

Use the chart below to record the different elements required to implement the strategies in each school district and school you're working with. Remember to also consider a communications plan, enforcement plan, and assessment/monitoring/evaluation plan for each strategy.

School District or School Name: _____

Strategy: _____

ACTIVITIES	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	OTHER TEAM MEMBERS	TIMELINE	NOTES

SECTION 7

PROMOTING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESS



KEY POINTS

- The Importance of Promoting Successes
- How to Promote Success
- Tools

In this section you will learn how to promote school and school district success. This section has tools that will show you how to use earned media and write up fact sheets or case studies on successes with other schools and school districts that you can share with school leadership.

PROMOTING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESS

→ The Importance of Promoting Successes

It is important to promote the success of schools and districts that have implemented comprehensive strategies to promote a healthy school environment. By highlighting issues that the school has successfully worked towards, and social norms that have successfully been impacted in your communities, this will help grow buy in from other school districts and schools, that you can eventually recruit in the area to be a part of this initiative.

→ How to Promote Success

To promote successes of school districts and schools at implementing comprehensive strategies to prevent sexual violence, you can:



Use earned media

- ✓ Contact local newspapers and news stations, use social media, etc
- ✓ It is advantageous to contact news outlets about a story during an awareness month or if you have an event to promote
- ✓ Note that earned media can result in an overwhelming amount of contacts from other schools interested in implementing, so it is best to have a plan of action for responding to requests in place
- ✓ Refer to **Tool 7.1: Sample Press Release** to see an example of a press release that you can use to garner media attention from newspapers and news stations



Write up a fact sheet/case study

- ✓ You can develop a fact sheet or a case study to present your success that can be shared with other school districts. Refer to **Tool 7.2: Sample Fact Sheet/Case Study** for an example of a regional success, that may be used to understand what a success might look like, and also share with your decision-maker

PROMOTING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESS

Tools



Tool 7.1: Sample Press Release

We celebrate work being done in [name of school/district] to create safer schools in [city or county]. Schools can play a critical role in addressing student safety and wellness, including the prevention of sexual violence. Sexual violence remains a crucial issue across the globe, with adolescents being at an increased risk for violence. Schools are an ideal point of intervention as they have enormous potential to impact the wider community and prevent any incidents before they occur.

To address this, [name of school/district] is joining other districts across the nation to create safer environments in their communities. These schools are part of the healthy school environment initiative and partner with [name of your organization] to make positive change to not only prevent violence but promote overall student health and wellness. Through this work, schools receive educational programming and guidance on how to create organizational policy that supports student safety, assess the safety of the physical school environment and roll out media campaigns in their schools.

The school community in [name of location] is extremely excited about this initiative. As [vice principle or other school administrator or staff] says, [include staff quote e.g. "Our school prides itself in putting student health and safety first and foremost, this initiative has allowed us to take it to the next level, so that all students have a place they can come and learn and have a brighter future"]. Students in [name of location] also expressed enthusiasm about this initiative. [Include Student Quote e.g. "I'm excited to go to a school that cares about the safety of all the students"].

Schools and Districts throughout [name of location] are invited to join this initiative. To learn more about the healthy school environment initiative and other work being done in the school community, they can contact [insert contact info] for more information about how to get involved.

PROMOTING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESS



Tool 7.2: Sample Case Study

The Woodrow Wilson Senior High School is a high school in Upstate New York that serves about 900 students and includes grades 9-12. As the RPE in this area, you had been providing educational programs to this school district for over ten years but shifted your work to a more comprehensive approach about two years ago. When you first approached the school district about working with this high school they were interested but seemed to not understand the comprehensive nature of the Healthy School Environment approach. Their motivation increased dramatically after a serious sexual assault and bullying episode in their school and they became immediately open and responsive to this strategy.

During the first year, the RPE staff member worked with the district to establish a Memorandum of Understanding; create a work group of parents, students, faculty and staff; and began co-facilitating Bringing in the Bystander in all their freshman health classes with the goal of the health teachers taking over this task. The school leadership, both at the district level and at the High School, wanted to focus on the social norm of active bystander behaviors in their initial work and it became a large focus of the work group during that initial year.

The work group was concerned that there was apathy among both students and faculty/staff about intervening in incidents regarding bullying, texting, using social media inappropriately and other potentially problematic behaviors. During the first year, the school decided to begin with a faculty/staff survey and a student survey about attitudes regarding bystanders. In addition, they started to think about reviewing the student handbook and code of conduct, as well as, the staff and faculty handbook. They struggled with how they could shift the social norm to a place where everyone had a responsibility in protecting students. It was clear that janitors, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, as well as faculty were as important as students in doing this work.

During the first year, the RPE staff person also tried to get a sense of the number of reports of sexual assault the school had recorded. This was another area of focus, although tricky, in that there was not a clear sense of what should be reported to whom and for what. This was a big undertaking in that the principal and other leaders seemed reluctant to disclose this and the work group along with the RPE staff member determined this would be something to consider later in the process.

To support the social norm of active bystander behaviors the school opted to involve students in creating an internal social media campaign and utilized the graphics and messages developed by the students. This student led work was used on internal social media messages displayed in the school, as well as on other student materials.

PROMOTING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESS

Tool 7.2: (Continued)

During the second year, the Bringing in the Bystander work continued, as well as the social media messaging regarding bystander work. The work group, with the support of the principal, opted to do an environmental assessment of the school building and surrounding grounds to determine if there were areas in the school where students were more vulnerable. Using strategies from the Shifting Boundaries intervention this was operationalized and the results were shared in a strategic manner with the work group, students, faculty/staff and leadership.

Also in the second year, the RPE staff worked with the school to develop a communication strategy that would begin to highlight some of the work and progress about shifting the social norm in their school. Specific communication strategies were developed for parents and students and the community at large. Work that is still emerging is to revisit the student code of conduct as it relates to bullying, texting and sexual assault, as well as to begin conversations about off campus events like band trips, sporting events and other extra-curricular activities. The work group has had some new membership but continues to be an integral part of the decision-making process. They are currently beginning conversations about the role of the coaches and sports teams in their Healthy School Environment work.

SECTION 8

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES



KEY POINTS

➔ Resources

This section contains additional tools and resources to support you with implementation.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

🔗 Resources

Stop SV Technical Package is a collection of strategies put forth by the CDC that can be used to prevent sexual violence, based on best available evidence. This tool helps communities understand and prioritize prevention activities.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>

Social Emotional Learning “is the process through which children, youth, and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/sel.html>

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) is CDC’s framework for looking at student health in schools. The model emphasizes the role of community in the support of child health and academic achievement. The WSCC model also promotes use of best evidence-based practices.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

“Know Your IX” is a youth-led project by Advocates for Youth to help students end sexual and dating violence in schools. Their website has information regarding education schools on Title IX, current training initiatives and policy change.

<https://www.knowyourix.org/statepolicy-playbook/prevention/>

Ending K-12 Sexual Harassment: A Toolkit for Parents and Allies: is a toolkit created by Stop Sexual Assault in Schools, a parent led organization that works to educate students, families and schools about their rights regarding sexual harassment in schools.

<https://stopsexualassaultinschools.org/toolkit/>

Sexual Violence & Individuals Who Identify as LGBTQ Information Packet contains resources focus on working with communities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

<https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-information-packets/sexual-violence-individuals-who-identify-lgbtq>