Guidelines for Working with Youth, Families, and Communities for Sexual Violence Prevention

Evidence suggests that positive influences in youth development contribute to lower rates of youth-reported risky behaviors, including violence. Therefore, sexual violence prevention initiatives should include a youth development focus. However, prevention initiatives for youth must go beyond working with and empowering youth. You must also implement prevention strategies with adults and community institutions to foster the positive influences and ensure accountability for thriving youth. The principles below can help plan, implement, and evaluate prevention strategies for youth, their families, and communities in efforts to end sexual violence.

Principle	Description
Focus on primary prevention	Primary prevention is any action, strategy or policy that prevents sexual violence from **initially occurring**. Examples of primary prevention strategies include working with men and boys to confront norms of masculinity, promoting the positive development of youth through asset building at individual and community levels, and organizational policies on responding to sexualized bullying.
Use a comprehensive approach	Taking a comprehensive approach includes working at all levels of the social ecological model. For example, a school-based curriculum to build bystander skills and explore healthy, respectful relationships for a group of 8th graders is working to influence the **student (Individual)** as the curriculum works to change individual knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. A multi-session pilot program for a boys basketball team to identify and change peer group norms that are supportive of sexual harassment is working to change **relationship** level risk factors. Although these are both set in a school, the change doesn't occur school-wide as the culture of the school has not been addressed as change is being pursued one person at a time through the curriculum. A school working group that is trying to change the **policies and procedures** of the school to change its **climate and environment** concerning acceptance of violence as a norm and honoring and modeling respect and positive interactions is a **Community** level change that will also support change in individual behavior. To reinforce these messages outside of school settings the local rape crisis center is embarking on a community-wide initiative that includes a focus on promoting healthy relationship norms to influence **societal** level change.

	Additionally, all activities should be **culturally competent**, use a **variety of teaching methods**, be grounded in **behavior change theory** and have **multiple sessions** with follow-up booster sessions.
Promote a positive approach	In addition to prevention strategies that aim to reduce risk factors for perpetration and victimization it is essential that we expand our portfolio to include "progressive prevention" – promoting the behaviors you want youth and adults to adopt. Asset building, or positive youth development, can and should occur on an individual, relationship and community level with all sectors working toward a common vision of a healthy community that supports the positive development of youth.
Build relationships	The principle of relationship building comes into play at two levels. The first level is building collaborative relationships among youth serving agencies and other key partners to effectively advance a shared vision of healthy youth development to prevent sexual violence. The second level is implementing prevention strategies that promote caring connections between youth and their peers; youth and their families; youth and other adults; and youth and the agencies that serve them.
Assess capacity and readiness	As you develop your program plan or logic model you will also need to assess the capacity and readiness of both your own organization and the individuals/organizations/community you plan to work. Assessments may include staff capacity and training opportunities and organizational and/or community commitment to prevention.
Continuous quality improvement through evaluation	Evaluation is essential to knowing if our prevention strategies and programs are achieving the results we intended. Taking a continuous quality improvement approach allows you to have ongoing feedback on the implementation process to make it more likely you'll achieve positive outcomes by making any adjustments needed as you implement in order to stay on target. Your evaluation plan should also match your logic model and measure the desired outcomes of the strategy or program.