

Guidelines for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence & Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors are conditions or characteristics that increase the likelihood of SV/IPV perpetration. Risk factors do not necessarily directly cause SV/IPV, but their presence increases the chance of perpetration. Risk factors can be characteristics of an individual or conditions present in the environment. Risk factors can be used to help focus prevention efforts. The following factors are supported by research and/or practical experience from the field.²

Protective Factors are conditions or characteristics that decrease the likelihood of SV/IPV perpetration, while also facilitating a broad range of related positive outcomes. A single protective factor does not necessarily directly prevent SV/IPV, but the presence of multiple protective factors decreases the chance of perpetration. Protective factors can be characteristics of an individual or conditions present in the environment. Protective factors can be used to help focus prevention efforts. The following factors below are supported by research and/or practical experience from the field.²

Individual

Risk Factor: Internalized belief that certain groups of people have rights and benefits over other groups of people.²

Risk Factor: Lack of empathy for intimate/sexual partners.²

Risk Factor: Belief in rigid, stereotyped gender roles.²

Risk Factor: Experience that violence and coercion are accepted and effective “means to an end”.²

Risk Factor: Exposure to sexually explicit media.⁴

Risk Factor: Hostility toward women.⁴

Protective Factor: Personal belief in the positive value of, and commitment to, caring, equality, and social justice.²

Protective Factor: Presence of skills to experience healthy sexuality and engage in healthy relationships.²

Protective Factor: Willingness and ability to be active participants in a thriving community in which healthy sexuality and healthy relationship are core values.²

Protective Factor: A personal belief in gender equality and attitudes and behaviors consistent with that belief.²

Relationship

Risk Factor: Reinforcement/pressure from family and friends to exercise entitlement.²

Risk Factor: Peer/family support for adversarial approaches to relationships and sexuality. That is, promoting “the battle of the sexes” as the normal way that boys/girls and men/women should relate to one another.²

Risk Factor: Absence of role models who promote healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.²

Risk Factor: Reluctance to hold others accountable when relationship is perceived as “private”, often stemming from social norms that frame sexual and intimate partner violence as “private” or “family issues”, and prohibit persons outside of the family or “private” group from intervening.²

Protective Factor: Youth who feel connected and committed to school are at a lower risk of harming others through dating violence, youth violence, and bullying, and are at lower risk for suicide.¹

Protective Factor: Families and/or important figures provide a caring, open, and encouraging environment that actively promotes positive development, and fosters skills to lay the foundations for healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.²

Protective Factor: Peers, families, and intimate partners effectively identify and respond to behaviors that are potential precursors to sexual violence.²

Community

Risk Factor: Institutions that entitle groups to maintain greater social status over others.²

Risk Factor: Decision-making institutions within communities support an adversarial approach to relationships and sexuality.²

Risk Factor: Weak and/or inconsistent community sanctions for perpetration of sexual violence.²

Risk Factor: Lack of institutional support from police and judicial system.⁴

Risk Factor: General tolerance of sexual violence within the community.⁴

Protective Factor: Coordination of resources and services among community agencies.¹

Protective Factor: Access to mental health and substance abuse services.¹

Protective Factor: Support and connectedness, including connectedness to one's community, family, pro-social peers, and school.¹

Protective Factor: Communities engage diverse people in activities promoting healthy relationships and sexuality.²

Protective Factor: The principles of healthy relationships and sexuality are demonstrated across various institutions.²

Protective Factor: The presence of just/fair boundaries and expectations about healthy relationships and sexuality are applied consistently throughout the community.²

Societal

Risk factor: Rigid gender roles stifle individuality while artificially promoting men as society's leaders and subjugating women to passive or supporting roles. Social norms governing "acceptable sexual behavior" correspond to these rigid gender roles, and create a sexually adversarial climate in which sexual violence and intimate partner violence can thrive.²

Risk Factor: Power differences between groups of people are interwoven in culture. These differences might take the form of sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism. They create the opportunity for abuse of power, including perpetration of intimate partner and sexual violence.²

Risk Factor: Societal norms that support male superiority and sexual entitlement.³

Risk Factor: Societal norms that maintain women's inferiority and sexual submissiveness.³

Protective Factor: Culture equitably values and relies on experiences and leadership from all members of society, including persons of any gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, or belonging to any other historically oppressed group that has experiences restrictions on their rights.²

Protective Factor: Shared responsibility across social institutions for developing and maintaining thriving communities in which healthy sexuality and healthy relationships are core values.²

Protective Factor: Ensuring accountability and expectations of people to interact respectfully is a fundamental part of life.²

References

1. "Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence." (n.d.): n. pag. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Prevention Institute, July 2014. Web.
2. Guidelines for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence. Rep. N.p.: Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance, 2009. Print.
3. "Sexual Violence: Risk Factors for Perpetration." PsycEXTRA Dataset (n.d.): n. pag. 2014. Web.
4. "Sexual Violence: Risk and Protective Factors." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 Feb. 2015. Web. 10 Aug. 2015.