



PREVENTING VIOLENCE: Roles for National Public Health Agencies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY • OCTOBER 2011

BACKGROUND

Violence is a leading cause of death and disability in the US¹. While there has been a growing recognition of the unique skills and solutions the public health community can offer to prevent violence², the role of public health is often overlooked and many times public health practitioners themselves do not know the appropriate roles they should assume to contribute to solutions.

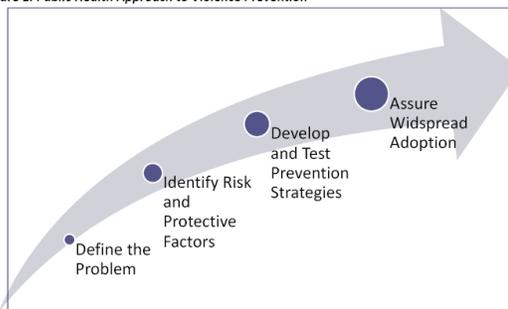
In April 2010, the Safe States Alliance, with funding from the CDC, convened a roundtable of twenty-four violence prevention experts and stakeholders to address this issue. Recommendations resulting from these discussions are offered as a resource for public health departments in identifying specific roles for their organizations in a full report on the Safe States website. This is a summary of recommended roles for national public health agencies.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention is a four-step process designed to guide practitioners through program planning, evaluation, and dissemination (Figure 1)³.

The first step in the public health approach is to clearly define the problem by collecting and analyzing epidemiological data. The second step is to identify the factors that protect

Figure 1. Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention



people or put them at a higher risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence. The third step is to select and adapt a preexisting

intervention or develop and test new prevention strategies to appropriately address the issue. The final step is to broadly disseminate the intervention strategies and evaluation results to facilitate adoption in other communities.

OVERARCHING ROLES

Public health leaders at national, state, and local levels must continuously demonstrate an interest in and commitment to the multi-disciplinary approach needed to prevent violence. Throughout the roundtable meeting four overarching goals

were identified that must be addressed at all levels of public health in order to successfully prevent violence:

1. Institutionalize visible, high-level leadership that prioritizes violence prevention;
2. Prioritize a balanced approach that includes the primary prevention of violence;
3. Focus on disparities and the role of social determinants, including racism and poverty; and
4. Re-frame the issue of violence as a community-level problem that involves all of us, and not simply “them.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

- 1 Strengthen public health systems;
- 2 Convene stakeholders;
- 3 Improve surveillance;
- 4 Provide funding and other resources;
- 5 Educate and advocate for violence prevention policies;
- 6 Develop and disseminate effective policies, programs and tools;
- 7 Identify connections between different types of violence and other key areas of public health concern; and
- 8 Conduct needs assessments and strategic planning.

By effectively collaborating with one another, federal agencies and national public health organizations can work together to identify prevention priorities to form a national agenda, effectively utilize limited prevention dollars, and create a lens through which the broader causes of violence can be better understood. Ideally, these national agencies and organizations can serve as a model for states and communities by showing how multi-sectoral partnerships can work effectively and successfully to plan, implement, and evaluate violence prevention efforts.

