

Peer Solutions

Linking Schools, Families, and Communities with a Message of Respect


Prevention/Promotion Program Theory

Peer Solutions relies on science-based theories to support its interpersonal violence prevention program, *STAND & SERVE...Demonstrating Respect as the Norm*. Peer Solutions believes that activities based upon these theories are the most effective way to promote peace and prevent harm by decreasing risk factors while building protective factors and strengthening assets. Peer Solutions addresses the underlying conditions of *sexual, dating, family, gang, gun and school violence, child abuse, suicide, depression, oppression, self-injury, eating disorders, homelessness, substance abuse, poor school performance, delinquency and sexual risk behavior including teen pregnancy* in order to create a healthy, violence free lifestyle. The theories Resiliency/Asset Building, Community Development/Mobilization, Social Norms, Peer Education/Mentoring/Modeling, Social Change and Social Marketing are closely connected and the application of one often supports the application of another.

1. Resiliency/Asset Building: Addressing Risk and Protective Factors

Resiliency refers to the ability of an individual to respond to and cope with adversity in a healthy, productive manner. Students must be raised in environments that foster skills and include the support necessary to develop and strengthen assets. Prevention efforts should focus on resiliency building so that positive responses are reinforced and negative choices can be avoided. Children will then grow to become healthy, caring and responsible adults.¹

This approach is especially relevant for children who experience or witness violence in the home. Research is indicating that the propensity toward violence is passed on through early *behavior modeling* or through physiological changes that occur while witnessing violence at an early age.² One study found that recent exposure to violence in the home was a significant factor in predicting a child's violent behavior.³ Children exposed to a culture of violence found to be at significantly elevated risk for a broad range of serious concerns including: *sexual, dating, family, gang, gun and school violence, suicide, depression, self-injury, eating disorders, homelessness, substance abuse, poor school performance, delinquency and sexual risk behavior including teen pregnancy*.⁴ Resiliency building may reduce the potential of individuals engaging in negative and damaging behaviors towards others and/or self. After years of research the Search Institute has created a widely used list of 40 developmental assets that, in various combinations, are proven to foster resiliency in children.⁵

 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: Peer Solutions prevention programs provide and foster a number of these resiliency-building assets, such as those listed below. The three primary assets to be strengthened include: Youth as Resources, Positive Peer Influence and Interpersonal competence. These assets decrease risk factors and build protective factors helping to create healthy, violence free lifestyles. The development of these assets is also encouraged by the application of other Peer Solutions' program theories. For instance, peer educating and modeling presents youth as a resource to their community and spreads positive peer influence. Social marketing can be used as a tool for presenting and promoting

¹ Bernard, Bonnie: *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in Family, School and Community*. Western Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, 1991.

² Victor La Cerva, MD, *Pathways to Peace*, Heal Foundation Press 1996, Special Issue on DV, *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267 no. 23 (17 June 1992)

³ Singer, M.I., Miller, D.B., Guo, S., Slovak, K & Frieson, T., *The Mental Health Consequences of Children's Exposure to Violence*. Cleveland, OH: Cuyahoga County Community Health Research Institute, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, 1998

⁴ Wolfe, D.A., Wekerle, C., Reitzel, D. and Gough, R., "Strategies to Address Violence in the Lives of High Risk Youth." In Peled, E., Jaffe, P.G. and Edleson, J.L. (eds.), *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. New York: Sage Publications. 1995. *American Journal of Public Health*, February 2003, Vol 92, No 12, *The Prevention Researcher*, www.tpronline.org 11/04

⁵ Search Institute: *Forty Developmental Assets*. Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1997.

positive values such as responsibility and restraint. In both cases, the goal is to prevent harm towards others and/or self.

External Assets PEER SOLUTIONS addresses include but are not limited to:

- Constructive Use of Time
- Other adult relationships
- Caring school climate
- Resources available and accessible in the community
- Empowerment Community values youth
- Youth as resources**
- Service to others
- Parent Involved in Schooling

- Caring Neighborhood
- Creative Activities
- Youth Programs
- Safety
- School Boundaries
- Positive peer influence**
- Adult role models
- High Expectations

Internal Assets PEER SOLUTIONS addresses include but are not limited to:

- Positive Values Caring
- Self Esteem
- School Engagement
- Honesty
- Social Competencies/Planning and decision making
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Interpersonal competence-*empathy/sensitivity/friendship***
- Resistance Skills
- Sense of purpose

- Commitment to Learning
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Restraint
- Bonding to school
- Cultural Competence
- Positive identity personal power
- Positive view of personal future

Risk Factors Addressed Include:

- Low commitment to school
- Family Conflict/History
- Availability of drugs/firearms
- Media Portrayals of Violence
- Lack of adult supervision – greater reliance on and influence be peers than adults
- Community Norms/Laws favorable toward drug use/crime

- Favorable Attitudes toward problem behaviors
- Friends involved in problem behaviors
- Early initiation of problem
- Low neighborhood/community attachment

Protective Factors Addressed Include:

- Healthy and Clear Standards/beliefs
- Bonding to school, family, community and peers
- Community Service Opportunities
- Bonding with pro-social adult
- High value place on education

- Attachment to school/community
- Resistance and Social skills
- Social competence skills
- Support network and social bonds
- Opportunities for meaningful participation

Risk Factor

Protective Factor


Asset to Build and Strengthen

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. <u>Family History</u> – <i>Prior Victimization increases chances of future victimization/perpetration.</i> | Support Network and Social Bonds | Youth as Resources – <i>Students are educators, mentors and resource & referral agents. Getting help may reduce/prevent future victimization/perpetration.</i> |
| 2. <u>Friends who engage in problem behavior</u> – <i>High risk age 16-19 - Risks of perpetration* are included and addressed in program activities. *Sexually aggressive peers and acceptance of myths.</i> | Bonding to School, Community and Peers/ Community Service | Positive Peer Influence – <i>Students model and teach healthy behaviors and skills to prevent violence while participating in monthly community service projects and awareness activities on and off campus. Victim empathy, perpetrator prevention and safe bystander responsibility are highlighted. 90% behavior learned through modeling. Dr. Victor LaCerva</i> |
| 3. <u>Acceptance of Violence in home, schools and communities</u> – <i>favorable attitudes and norms towards violence. -Media Influences.</i> | Healthy and Clear Standards/Beliefs | Interpersonal Competence <i>Empathy, sensitivity, healthy relationships and behaviors - Students build skills by Demonstrating Respect as the Norm, actively resisting stereotypes and myths and seeking help when in need.</i> |

2. Community Development: *Education & Mobilization*

Community development theory is a driving force behind all of Peer Solutions' efforts. Under this theory interpersonal violence is understood as a broad, pervasive social problem also connected to drug abuse, suicide, depression, oppression, homelessness, eating disorders, child abuse, teen pregnancy and family, gang, school and dating violence. As such, the eradication of harm in all forms requires extensive change on a community level. As proposed by social theorist William Loftquist, community development theory asserts that the most successful way to address this negative social condition is by engaging the community in all stages of the prevention process, including development, implementation and evaluation.⁶ In addition, "Community-based approaches in conjunction with targeted approaches in schools...increase the likelihood for success to improve personal and community health."⁷

When stakeholders participate in the forming of decisions that will affect their community, they develop a sense of ownership that strengthens their desire to pursue effective outcomes. As people work together towards these common goals, a sense of community responsibility to solve the problem is developed. This in turn leads to the formation of a sense of the common good, and the positive measures employed help to create opportunities for the collective growth of the community. As community partnership, growth and well-being is stimulated, positive community change will occur. The ownership of the solutions to the problem shifts from the hands of social service professionals into the hands of the community.

 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: Peer Solutions focuses on long term solutions and includes stakeholders in all levels of decision-making and planning in its prevention efforts both within schools, communities, regions and across the state. Stakeholders are identified, recruited and engaged by members of the target population with assistance from Peer Solutions staff. Students construct the lesson plans they will use in their peer education programs. Input from teachers, staff, and family members is sought to ensure that the programming provided is what will best serve the needs of the community. Peer Solutions collaborates with community organizations doing similar work to avoid duplication and strengthen effectiveness. Social marketing and social norms efforts are also supported by the application of community development theory, as student and community input are sought in the design of prevention messages. Peer Solutions supports the Prevention Principles for School-Based Programs by focusing on clear goals and objectives designed for each specific target group and offering on-going sequential learning promoting positive attitude and behavior change.⁸

3. Social Norms Theory:

Social norms theory asserts that misperceptions of peer behavior can lead to negative behavior choices for individuals, or foster an environment in which these negative behaviors are condoned and perpetuated. The theory, which was first proposed by H. Wesley Perkins and Alan Berkowitz, has primarily been applied in efforts to curb "problem" drinking on college campuses. Studies have shown that college students often overestimate the degree to which their peers engage in "high-risk" drinking. In order to conform to this perceived social norm they engage in the behavior and create an environment that condones it. Conventional prevention efforts have tended to employ "scare tactics" and capitalize on fear to discourage the behavior. Yet *social norms theory utilizes a positive approach*. Students are made aware of the true norm, in this instance that most college students are not binge problem drinkers, and are encouraged to conform to the positive behavior instead. Students are no longer characterized as deviants but as role models, and this shift from the negative to the positive increases the effectiveness of prevention.

Schools such as James Madison University, Mary Washington College and Western Washington University are now beginning to apply social norms theory to violence prevention. They are using social marketing and peer education to dissolve false norms about violence and replace them with awareness of the true norms in order to change behavior and undermine the violent culture of our society. Preventionists believe that when people realize for instance that most men are not abusers, nor do they approve of abuse, they will be encouraged to avoid the behavior themselves and not tolerate it when engaged in by others. As men and women model that sexual violence is not an acceptable behavior others will also.⁹

⁶ Loftquist, William: *The Technology of Development*. Development Publications, Tucson, Arizona, 1996

⁷ Healthy People 2010: Objectives for Improving Health, Chapter 7, page 7. CDC – Health Resources and Services Administration 8/02

⁸ The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) checklist for prevention education: Prevention Principles for School-Based Programs

⁹ Berkowitz, AD (Forthcoming), *Applications of Social Norms Theory to Other Health and Social Justice Issues*. To be published as Chapter 16 in H. Wesley Perkins (Ed). *The Social Norms Approach to Prevention*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass (also available from [www. Alanberkowitz.com](http://www.Alanberkowitz.com))

🌐 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: A primary objective of Peer Solutions' prevention and education program **STAND & SERVE...*Demonstrating Respect as the Norm*** is the replacement of false norms with accurate information, highlighting and encouraging the positive qualities of today's youth and adults. When students learn that violence is not the norm and that the majority of people do not perpetrate it, they will be more likely to avoid the behavior and not tolerate it from others. Peer Solutions educates about these accurate norms and empowers youth to model and promote them to their peers, thus enhancing the potential to alter behavior by employing both the social norms approach and peer education/mentoring/modeling.

⌘ Peers are often "carriers of the misperception" and unintentionally end up promoting problematic norms. Thus, teaching peers the true healthy behaviors of the majority help them to be more effective as peer educators. (Social Learning Theory)

⌘ One of the goals of social norms is to identify and strengthen "protective factors" that associated with reductions in risk behaviors thereby fostering resiliency.

⌘ Research shows that providing correct information about the true norm helps people move through the stages of change more quickly.

⌘ Social Marketing is an effective strategy that utilizes social marketing techniques to promote program goals and positive social norms.

4. Peer Education, Mentoring & Modeling:

Albert Bandura's theory of social learning starts with a simple premise: human beings tend to model their own behavior after the behavior they see demonstrated by others. The probability that they will replicate a modeled behavior greatly increases if the modeler seems more like themselves. This means that peer modeling has an especially strong referent power. If students see their peers demonstrating respectful, non-violent, healthy behavior and taking the time to educate and raise awareness about respect and interpersonal violence in their communities, they will retain the lessons learned and desire to reproduce them. The motivating factor is the reward of becoming a part of the group. Obviously, the application of this theory has significant potential for positive change and youth development.¹⁰ When coupled with the fact that 90% of behavior is learned through modeling, peers learn best from peers and that we ourselves retain a greater percentage of learned information when we teach it to others, peer education, mentoring and modeling appears to offer the best framework for educating and effecting positive behavior change.¹¹ Model Goodness & Others Will Too.

🌐 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: Peer education, mentoring and modeling is the cornerstone of Peer Solutions' prevention strategy. Programs are designed to meet the needs of each target group, are youth driven and led and supported by community partnerships and relationships with caring adults. Positive role models are provided to assist individuals in achieving personal growth. Students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate workshops, provide resources and referral and model positive, respectful behavior on their campuses, within their families and in the community. Others witness their violence-free healthy behavior and begin to model it also. Youth participate in programs within schools and community organizations to educate their peers and promote accurate social norms, drawing upon this additional theory to enhance the effectiveness of their presentations.

5. Stages of Change:

An important concept in guiding prevention programming is the realization that behavior change is not instantaneous but rather develops along a continuum in a time frame specific to the individual or community involved. Research developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has revealed that people begin by thinking about the implications of a new behavior, and then form intentions to change. Next, people acquire the skills to do so and begin to perform the new behavior. After consistent reproduction, they reevaluate its effectiveness and its priority for them. This theory has important implications for enhancing the value of program evaluation. Instead of simply measuring the absence or presence of behavior change, the target's development along the continuum can be assessed, leading to a re-direction or fine tuning of prevention efforts if necessary, and validating programs by providing evidence of movement towards long-range goals.¹²

¹⁰ Bandura, Albert: Social Foundations of Thought and Action, 1986

¹¹ Victor La Cerva, MD, Pathways to Peace, Heal Foundation Press 1996, Special Issue on DV, Journal of the American Medical Association 267 no. 23 (17 June 1992)

¹² Higgins, Donna L. and O'Reilly, Kevin R.: Aids Community Demonstration Projects for HIV Prevention Among Hard-to-Reach Groups. Public Health Reports, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia.

- 🌐 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: When developing and implementing programs, Peer Solutions employs stages of change theory (Prochaska), evaluating the target audience's position along the behavior change continuum and tailoring programs to meet those needs. Information gathered from community development efforts are often used to assess the stage of change of the audience and for curriculum development. In addition, Peer Solutions formats its program evaluation model and tools so that they may accurately reflect the movement along the continuum of change that its prevention efforts are stimulating. For example, we may implement a campus climate survey and assessment tools include questions that ask about new information learned, attitudes and the intentions for behavior change; answers will display whether important prevention concepts were absorbed and if the workshop was effective in getting participants to think about creating personal change.



6. Social Change & Marketing:

Social marketing is an effective strategy for changing human behavior in regards to a social or public health issue. Social marketing capitalizes upon the ideas and practices of traditional commercial advertising to promote an idea, attitude, or behavior. In order to promote positive and respectful behaviors, inspire change and prevent negative behavior choices, the message must be marketed in a fashion that ensures its delivery to the target populations. In a sense, the behavior promoted becomes the "product," and a recognizable and resonating "brand" must be created in order for the target population to retain the idea and ultimately be encouraged to implement it.¹³

- 🌐 How Peer Solutions applies this theory: Peer Solutions currently incorporates the principles of this theory in all of its prevention programs. It is a very effective way to expose large populations to messages that promote peace, respect, and resources and referral for victims, perpetrators and witnesses of violence. **STAND & SERVE** members have branded the club and its messages. Slogans such as *Demonstrating Respect as the Norm* and *Model Goodness and Others Will Too*, and the sign language symbol meaning "I love you" are often used to reinforce concepts. Due to the exposure of these symbols and slogans at program activities and on T-shirts, flyers, posters, announcements and other print and electronic media, schools and the community have begun to associate them with the mission and vision of **STAND & SERVE** and Peer Solutions. Social marketing techniques help to promote accurate social norms and are tailored to the appropriate stage of change of the target audience. Information is delivered in a positive, personal context thereby increasing the positive impact on the individual. Social marketing compliments and strengthens all Peer Solutions' theories.

"We must be the change we wish to see"

Mahatma Gandhi

"If we are to have real peace, we must begin with the children."

Mahatma Gandhi

We are the Solution... Peace Begins With Me

¹³ Washington State Sexual Assault Prevention Resource Center: Social Marketing, Module IV. Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Seattle, Washington.

ADDRESSING THE UNDERLYING CONDITIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS AT THE HEART OF PEER SOLUTIONS' PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.

The UNDERLYING CONDITIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE named in any given community will be specific to that community. It is likely that some of these categories of conditions will appear, but not necessarily. These are examples of what you may expect to see. The following is a list of UNDERLYING CONDITIONS of sexual violence common in most communities targeted in the State of Washington.

- 🌐 Violence accepted as a norm
- 🌐 Oppression issues (sexism, racism, classism, etc.)
- 🌐 Abuse of power and control
- 🌐 Gender role stereotypes
- 🌐 Lack of knowledge and education about sexual violence
- 🌐 Lack of consequences and resources for perpetrator behavior
- 🌐 Victim-blaming
- 🌐 Systems failing to work together
- 🌐 Modeling of inappropriate and violent behavior
- 🌐 Silence and fear

SOURCE:

Community Development and Sexual Violence Prevention, Creating Partnerships for Social Change By: Gayle M. Stringer, M.A.1999, A publication of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs2415 Pacific Ave. S.E. Olympia, WA 98501

Peer Solutions therefore strives to:

- ⌘ Demonstrate Respect as the Norm as a means to interpersonal violence prevention.
- ⌘ Promote Identity Respect, Healthy Relationships and Behaviors as an alternative to violence.
- ⌘ Increase awareness and education of sexual violence while addressing the negative effects and underlying conditions including depression/suicide, eating disorders, negative body image, homelessness, poor school performance, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, oppression and dating/domestic/family/gang and gun violence.
- ⌘ Encourage Perpetrator Responsibility including education and treatment to reduce future victimization.
- ⌘ Promote resources, referral, validation and empathy for victims of rape – (Only 7-15% of rapes are reported. People that hurt themselves or other most likely have been hurt and need help and understanding, without help, the cycle may continue.)
- ⌘ Are founded in community development and includes stakeholders in program development and implementation.
- ⌘ Build Safe Bystander Responsibility, Communication and Empowerment Skills as an alternative to violence.
- ⌘ Actively Address Ethnic and Cultural Relevance and Sensitivity to strengthen prevention and education efforts.
- ⌘ Take a **STAND & SERVE** our communities so that rape may be prevented. Model Goodness - Positive thoughts, words, feelings and actions. **(90% of behavior is learned through modeling- Dr. Victor LaCerva – Pathways to Peace)**

BEST PRACTICES INCORPORATED INTO PEER SOLUTIONS STAND & SERVE...Demonstrating Respect As the Norm Program

Alan D. Berkowitz

June, 2004

Peer Solutions *Demonstrating Respect as the Norm* incorporates a number of strategies that are considered to be “best practices” in the prevention field. These include the following:

1. **It is theory-based.** The program incorporates strategies derived from a number of well-validated theories in the prevention field.
2. **Peers are involved in primary roles.** Effective programs are relevant to the audience. This may require that presenters are from the same groups as their audiences. Peer Solutions involves youth in an empowering manner.
3. **The relation of sexual assault to other issues is acknowledged.** Sexual assault is not treated in isolation, but is connected to other relevant issues such as alcohol use, self-esteem, other forms of violence, and positive sexuality.
4. **Experts are used in an advisory role.** Judicious use of national experts helps ensure that the program is “state of the art” and that it employs the best practices described here.
5. **Collaborative partnerships are developed with key stakeholders.** Peer Solutions invests in the development of long-term partnerships with local and regional organizations that have common concerns and that can support each others’ work.
6. **Commitment to evaluation.** Programs are evaluated and revised based on feedback.
7. **Synergy is created between program elements.** Program components are “synergistic” or “mutually reinforcing” rather than distinct and isolated. This fosters interaction effects so that whole is greater than the parts.
8. **Prevention is seen as a long-term process.** Building relationships, gaining trust, revising programs, and developing educators is a long-term process that requires patience.
9. **Tailored programs.** Programs are tailored to the needs of the audience, school and community to ensure that they are “relevant” and “salient” to participants.

(Presented at the Center for Disease Control’s 3rd National Sexual Violence
Prevention Conference, May 2004, Los Angeles)