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## Partners in Prevention: Engaging the Secondary School Community to Prevent Gender-Based Violence

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*Wednesday, November 16, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET*  
*Transcript*

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**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our webinar, Partners in Prevention: Engaging the Secondary School Community to Prevent Gender-Based Violence.

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, and including the Office for Civil Rights, we are so pleased to have you with us here today. In fact, just over 1,200 people have registered for this webinar so we expect several more people to be joining us shortly. Thank you to all of you who are already online with us.

This webinar is part of our Lessons From the Field webinar series. This series highlights effective tools and techniques, as well as strategies employed by everyday practitioners to address the hot topics that are on the top of educators' minds.

You can access recorded webinars from the series on the webpage link that is now being placed into chat. Today, we'll be exploring strategies to prevent gender-based violence. If you have any additional strategies that are working for you in your community, please reach out to [bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov](mailto:bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov) to share what you're doing with us. Our work is stronger when we all share our ideas and benefit from sharing these effective strategies.

My name is Cindy Carraway-Wilson, and I'm a training specialist for the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, or NCSSE. NCSSE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Please visit our website to learn more about NCSSE, and to access a wide range of resources that address school climate and conditions for learning.

To give you just a sense of what the website looks like and what content it contains, here we share an image of our homepage on the right, along with some of our most popular products on the left. We also share the latest resources and events coming out from the field via social media, so please follow us.

Also, note that the materials that you see today, including the slides, the reference resources, and a recorded version of this webinar will be available on the event webpage within the website. Some of the items, including the slides and the speaker bios, have already been posted to the site.

Please also note that you can access previously recorded Lessons From the Field sessions by visiting the webinar series webpage, which is also listed here and will be posted in the chat.

Now, I'd like to show you briefly who else is in the room with you today. We have a lot of people coming in, and who have registered for this event. This slide gives you an idea of some of the roles that they identified with when they registered with us.

That other category at 34% includes people who identified as attorneys, people working with community-based organizations, federal program staff members, higher education professionals, mental health providers, prevention professionals, and state and local Health Departments, as well as students, some family members who also listed here, and Title IX coordinators and violence prevention specialists. We welcome each and every one of you in your roles to help keep our secondary school communities safe from gender-based violence.

Now, I'd like to review the agenda. We're going to be finishing up this logistics piece in just a moment, and I will transfer the mic over to the Department of Education representative, who I'll introduce shortly to do our welcome. Then we'll have two speakers give us a brief overview and set some context from the CDC. Then we'll move into our panel discussion, and end with our closing remarks.

Our speakers have a wide range of experience and they're coming from a wide range of areas within our country, so we're happy to have this diverse set of speakers. We encourage you to click the link on the slide and the link that is going into the chat right now if you wish to see the full bios of our speakers.

At this time, I'd like to welcome to the floor Dr. Bernadine Futrell, who is the deputy assistant secretary of equity and discretionary grants and support services at the Office of Elementary and Secondary ED.

**Bernadine Futrell:**

Thank you. Thank you so much. Hello, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar. Again, I'm Dr. Bernadine Futrell. I am a deputy assistant secretary at the United States Department of Education in our Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, where I lead our equity and discretionary grant work.

I want to thank you all for being here today. I truly believe that we can always do more when we come together than what we could do on our own, and today is about just that. The topic for today's discussion, Engaging the Secondary School Community to Prevent Gender-Based Violence, is very important.

No student, at any age, deserves to be subject to sexual harassment or other forms of gender-based violence. We have a special concern for our young students, who are often the most vulnerable. This makes our collective work on preventing gender-based violence all the more important.

Today, we will be hearing from a panel of great leaders throughout the nation who are working to stop this harm before it begins through innovation and collaboration. Our goal today is for you, for everyone here, whether you are a student, a staff member, or educator at a school, or in any other educational setting, to come away with specific activities or projects that you can use, you can consider adapting for your campus or school environment.

We are excited to have this conversation and thank you for being a part of this with us today. We're also honored to have Rosie Hidalgo, special assistant to the president and senior advisor on gender-based violence at the White House Gender Policy Council, joining us today to add a welcome and to help frame today's conversation.

**Rosie Hidalgo:**

Wonderful. Thank you so very much. Good afternoon, everyone. It's my pleasure to join you all today for this important dialogue on engaging the secondary school community to prevent gender-based violence.

As you may be aware, nearly three decades ago, as a senator, President Biden wrote and championed the original Violence Against Women Act, also known as VAWA, to improve efforts to prevent and address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

While a lot of progress has been made since that time to address these issues, we know that a lot of work remains to be done. This past March, President Biden signed into law bipartisan legislation to not only renew VAWA, but to strengthen it, to expand prevention efforts, and expand protections for survivors of sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence.

Additionally, we know that legislation is not enough. We need a much more robust, holistic, comprehensive approach to these issues. This last March on International Women's Day, President Biden signed an executive order creating the White House Gender Policy Council. Also, within that executive order, tasked us to work across the federal interagency partnerships to develop our nation's first ever National Action Plan to end gender-based violence.

We have been engaged in that effort. We've been getting a lot of great input from external stakeholders, survivor voices, and really seeing how, together, we can develop a much more holistic national commitment to this issue.

Also, this past June, President Biden signed another executive order creating a White House task force to address online harassment abuse, which we know is a growing problem. What we've been hearing as we've also been engaging in that effort are the ways in which issues like the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, sextortion, the use of deepfake, increasing threats that are sexualized and racialized, often targeting, in particular, young women, LGBTQ+ individuals through social media, and other forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence are really something that we need to do a lot more to prevent, to address, and to really support young people dealing with these issues.

In fact, just last month on the International Day of the Girl, we held an expert roundtable to listen to the voices of young survivors about the ways they are impacted, and the ways we can be doing more to support them and to prevent these issues.

As we move forward, prevention is front and center in all these efforts. President Biden believes strongly in prevention. In fact, when he was vice president, he visited many college campuses and also met with high school students to really talk about what more we could do to call everyone in to be a part of the solution, to change social norms so there is no tolerance for abuse, and to guide young people. Guide young people in healthy relationships and in the prevention of these harms.

Again, I want to extend my gratitude to all of you, all of you who are making the time to join this webinar today. Everyone's voice, everyone's leadership, everyone's commitment, dedication, innovation are crucial to be partners in prevention.

In particular, I want to express deep gratitude to the presenters we have on this panel today. Amazing individuals who are on the front lines, really helping lead away with promising practices, effective strategies, and really reminding all of us that there is hope if we work together to address these issues.

Again, thank you. I look forward to hearing your recommendations, and for all of us to continue to work together in these efforts. Thank you.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Rosie, thank you so much for your remarks and for your leadership with the White House Gender Policy Council. We are so grateful to you and all that you do to inspire, and support, and strengthen this work.

I want to echo your thanks to everybody who has joined us today for this really important conversation about engaging secondary school communities in preventing gender-based violence.

I'm Suzanne Goldberg. I am the deputy assistant secretary in the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education. Really, again, so happy to be with all of you for this conversation.

We know, and I think everybody here knows, who's joining us today knows that sexual violence and other kinds of gender-based violence can derail students in their classes, in their extracurricular activities, in their very participation and attendance at school. We know from many studies, too many studies that this occurs so much more often than it's reported.

We also know these issues intersect with Title IX. Title IX is the federal law. It's just celebrating its 50th birthday this year, 50th anniversary of being passed by Congress. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in all federally-funded education programs and activities.

Title IX has regulations, and those regulations have long-required school districts to have a Title IX coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the district's compliance. This is true at every recipient to federal funds, to have a Title IX coordinator coordinating compliance with Title IX's protection against sex discrimination. The Title IX regulations also require in K-12 schools that all employees who are aware of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, report that to the Title IX coordinator.

The question in our conversation today is, what steps can we take? What steps can each person, can everybody here take, and can be taken generally, to reduce the incidents of gender-based violence in schools, and to engage students and staff and everybody? Whether you work at a school, whether you're a student, whether you are a community member or family member, what can we all do to reduce the incidents of gender-based violence?

Our aim is for you to take the information that you hear today and use it and share it in whatever ways you can adapt and have be helpful in your own school community. To do this, we have amazing speakers, violence prevention experts, high school teachers and non-profit organization leaders, all with the goal of helping you expand your toolkit. Our format will start with some important background from our colleague in violence prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC.

Then, I will pose two rounds of questions to each of our speakers about their work and a lightning round of questions based on your questions in the chat, and that you've provided in advance. One other quick introductory point. The representatives of the organizations and schools in this webinar are here to share information and activities with you that may be useful to you and to other webinar participants.

Please note that the Department of Education is not endorsing the activities and information shared by participants, and each school's participation is unrelated to any of the Office for Civil Rights current or future enforcement of our civil rights laws.

I'd like to turn now to our first expert. Dr. Sarah DeGue is a senior scientist in the Centers for Disease Control's Division of Violence Prevention. She's going to talk with us about evidence-based prevention programming.

She is sharing foundational information that will be very helpful for those of you who are new to the topic, and will be a refresher for those of you who are familiar. Dr. DeGue, I'll turn it over to you.

**Sarah DeGue:**

Thank you so much, Suzanne. It's great to be here with this wonderful panel today to learn about what is happening in the field in terms of gender-based violence prevention, particularly in middle and high school, which is such an important age group to address this problem.

I want to start just by, first, I'll introduce myself. I'm Sarah DeGue. I'm a scientist in the Division of Violence Prevention at CDC. My work, for the last 20 years or so, has looked primarily at the prevention of sexual and teen dating violence.

I wanted to start by just setting the stage for the conversation today, and sharing some resources that CDC has for guiding prevention work in this area as well, which I'm hoping might be helpful to some of the audience members.

I want to start by just reminding everyone ... I'm sure this is familiar to you, but we know that sexual and dating violence starts really early. By high school, one in eight students have experienced physical or sexual dating violence, and one in 10 will experience sexual violence by anyone.

We know that that violence often starts earlier in middle school and it continues in college, so by adulthood, the rates of gender-based violence, victimization can be very high. This is a really serious public health problem and one that CDC has been addressing for several decades.

One way that CDC has worked to try to inform work in the field in this area is to develop these technical packages. We developed this set of prevention resources on a variety of topics, and violence prevention to give tools and guidance to states and communities as they're developing primary prevention models or plans for their community around violence prevention.

I want to talk a little bit about, first, the package for sexual violence. Maybe it'll change in a second here. As you'll see in a moment when the slides change ... There we go. In the sexual violence technical package, we identified five key strategies that you'll see here that are based on the best available research evidence.

Within each of those are a set of approaches that can be used to advance those strategies. In the boxes, I've highlighted a few of those strategies or those approaches that have the best evidence in middle and high school populations. I just want to give a couple examples of what those look like.

You'll see, under promote social norms that protect against violence, one of the approaches is bystander-based approaches. These are approaches you may have heard of where there are programs that teach students to step up, to speak up when they hear social norms being reinforced in their peer groups, or

in their schools, or in their communities that support violence, and to speak out against those.

It might be something as simple as saying, "That's not cool" when you hear a sexist joke, or intervening if you know that someone's at risk of perpetrating, or being a victim of sexual violence more specifically. That's one kind of evidence-based strategy.

We also have a lot of evidence for strategies or approaches that address men and boys. Some of these approaches or programs engage men and boys as allies in sexual violence prevention. They also provide skills for social norms change within peer groups, or addressing risk factors like rigid masculinity norms, for example.

Another strategy under create protective environments involves addressing hotspots in the school environment. There's evidence that you can ask students what parts of the school they find to be, that feel less safe to them, and then directing staff, monitoring, or changes to the physical environment to those areas to increase safety, and that those changes can result in decreased rates of sexual violence. Those are some examples from our sexual violence technical package.

The strategies in our dating and intimate partner violence, sexual, technical package are very similar. One of them that I want to highlight is teaching safe and healthy relationship skills. There's one program that was developed by CDC that I'll talk about briefly that uses that approach, and that's our Dating Matters program.

Dating Matters is a comprehensive team dating violence prevention model developed by CDC. It focuses on teaching healthy relationship skills and also includes some social-emotional learning content. It's unique in that it includes multiple coordinated prevention strategies that address risk and protective factors across the social ecology.

Rather than just addressing students, it also has programs for parents, for educators, for near peers, so high school students who implement a communication strategy directed towards middle school students. It includes some approaches that are implemented at the community level as well.

We did a randomized control trial across four areas of the U.S. over a seven-year period that recently ended. We found that Dating Matters reduced violence and risk behaviors by 3 to 11%, on average, in middle school, compared to another evidence based-teen dating violence prevention program.

In addition to finding that it prevented teen dating violence as intended, we also found that it had effects on a range of other violence outcomes and these other risk behaviors, including sexual violence and sexual harassment.

That's really ... set of programs in this case that can really preserve those prevention resources that can sometimes be scarce in the school environment. If you want to learn more about Dating Matters, you can check out our website. All of the resources to implement Dating Matters are available at no cost through our Dating Matters toolkit.

I'm excited as well that some of the strategies that you're going to hear about today from the panelists really seem to align with the strategies that are recommended by CDC in our technical packages for sexual and dating violence. Those will offer some additional examples of how these kinds of strategies can be implemented. I will post links to these webpages in the chat, and I look forward to the conversation. Thank you.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Thank you so much, Dr. DeGue, for that overview, for the resources. I really do encourage everybody here to check out the links because there is so much available. I'm excited now to turn to our additional panelists, who are going to share what they're doing on the ground to encourage and support prevention in secondary schools, including middle and high schools.

We'll begin with you, Dr. Sydney McKinney, executive director of the National Black Women's Justice Institute. Dr. McKinney, you were recently part of conducting a needs assessment of existing school system policies to support a school district efforts to keep all youth, especially Black girls and other girls of color, safe from gender-based violence in schools. Can you tell us more about what you did and talk to us about any results that you've been able to identify?

**Sydney McKinney:**

Yes. Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of this panel. I am very excited to be here. The National Black Women's Justice Institute is a non-profit research policy and capacity-building organization that is working to end the criminalization of Black women and girls.

We come to this work around gender-based violence in schools with a goal to support schools, and really strengthening their capacity to respond to incidents of gender-based violence in a culturally affirming, and gender responsive, and trauma-informed way.

We have been partnering with a school in the Midwest to help them really understand the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence in their schools. They came to us noting in their data that Black girls were having more contact with their school police, and when they really dug into those situations, learning that incidents of gender-based violence were at the root of the behaviors that were bringing them into contact with their school police.

Wanting to find an organization to help them, they reached out to us. As an organization that's committed to research and evaluation, we really wanted to take an evidence-based, evidence-informed approach to understanding what was happening in their school system, before devising a set of interventions and revising policies to really improve what was happening.



The needs assessment we conducted was meant to provide a baseline understanding of how gender-based violence impacted students, particularly Black girls, what kind of skills, training, experience school staff had around addressing gender-based violence.

We held a series of interviews with key stakeholders. Many of them were in the school system that we were working with. Then, we also had listening sessions so that we could speak to a broader swath of that community.

As part of our listening sessions with the adult staff, which included principals, assistant principals, health interventionists, social workers, and many more, we learned that many of the school staff felt ill-equipped to respond to instances of gender-based violence. That while they are trained, they didn't feel like the training was sufficient, and what was happening in their schools really depended on the kind of experience they had personally, or maybe passed down from other folks.

There wasn't a really consistent set of expectations within the school system about how schools should respond, and so educators really didn't feel like they had the capacity. They also felt like they didn't really know what gender-based violence was, and so weren't able to respond in the way that incidents really deserved.

We heard folks say that they still encountered staff who felt like there were kind of a boys will be boys mentality as far as instances that were brought to their attention. When we spoke to the students, the thing that we heard was a great deal of distrust.

Young people were reluctant to actually bring issues to school administrators. Even school administrators mentioned that when incidents were brought to their attention, it was often by a third party, not by the person who had experienced the harm.

It was really important for us to understand more deeply the sources of distrust. What we heard was not that the distrust came about because of poor responses to incidents of gender based violence, but it actually existed prior to. There were ways in which school staff and adults were interacting with young people that made them feel like they were not someone who would support them, and so ultimately, just made the decision that engaging with and reporting the harm was not something that would be beneficial to them, as school administrators weren't really supportive of them.

I'll just say the last thing that we've been doing is taking that information to create a plan for, how do we support the school? We've been thinking about training and different tools that we can create, and really wanting to do this needs assessment so that we're creating interventions that are aligned with their unique needs.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Dr. McKinney, thank you so much. I think you've brought out a couple of important points. Listening, and when we listen, what do we hear? You've heard people who feel ill-equipped. You hear challenges around trust. We're going to continue this conversation with those in mind. With that, let me turn us to Danielle Tuft. Danielle, you are the interpersonal and sexual violence prevention unit manager at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Tell us about the work you are doing in Colorado to support the prevention of gender-based violence in Colorado public schools. Can you give us some specific examples of activities and projects that you're working on to support on these issues?

**Danielle Tuft:**

Yes. Thank you so much. It's wonderful to be here with everyone and to hear from all of our panelists today. In Colorado, we are really focusing on upstream prevention, so looking really far before perpetration or violence happens to think about how we can really prevent it in the first place.

Like we shared before, one of those focus areas can be around creating protective environments. In Colorado, we've really been focusing on, what does it look like and how do we do that? How do we create those protective environments, particularly in K through 12 school settings?

We have two particular strategies that we work on. I'll share a little bit about both. The first one I want to share is on hotspot mapping. We heard very briefly on this before with Dr. DeGue, but really what this looks like in Colorado is our local partners on the ground are working in partnership with schools to really engage young people to identify spaces within their schools that they feel safe and unsafe.

Typically, we start really focusing on physical safety, so, "Where do you feel physically safe? Where do you feel physically unsafe?" Over time, we've found that the conversations oftentimes evolve and broaden, and so it's incorporated things around emotional safety, mental safety.

During COVID, it actually expanded to digital safety, and what does that mean and look like? Hotspot mapping can really be used broadly, but in Colorado, we really work with young people to build their voice and agency for change, and identifying how a school can better create protective environments or replicate those safe spaces that already exist within our communities and our school systems. And so really having young people identify those spaces, identify recommendations for the school, and then really be the presenters in partnership with school administration and teachers, and identifying how to adopt and move those recommendations forward.

Some examples of what that's looked like. We utilize an approach in looking at, what are the primary factors that are likely root causes of gender-based violence for young people? We know that if young people feel connected to their school, if young people feel connected to their community, if they have trusting adults with relationships, that those are all protective factors that are

likely going to reduce experiences of gender-based violence for our young people.

Focusing on that, we've had several different policies and practices that our students have identified as recommendations, and that several of our schools have actually started to adopt. Those could include things like having gender-affirming restrooms for students in school spaces. Having affirming pronoun usage, so allowing a young person to identify what their pronoun is, and having a policy or a practice in place for teachers respecting that.

Modifying physical environments. We've had students identify challenges with the physical environments of locker rooms, or hallways, or cafeterias, and how to create more privacy or set up more safe environments in those particular areas.

Policies in support of GSAs, gender, sexuality alliances, other student-led or student-driven clubs. We've seen practices to increase supervision. Oftentimes, in spaces and schools that typically don't hold as much ownership or supervision like a lunchroom, or a hallway, or a stairwell, really having practices for teachers or school staff to be in those spaces.

Then, also staggering dismissal times, so thinking about class transition times and the crowds that often happen there and what that means for safety, particularly in those less supervised spaces, and just missing that to really create more protective environments.

These have all been things that have been student-driven that have directly come out of our young people in Colorado as identified recommendations for change, so I wanted to share on that.

Then, very briefly, our other work we do is on school policy, which is oftentimes connected to that. That's working with local community members and school personnel to build momentum for a lot of the recommendations coming out of hotspot mapping.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Great. Thank you so much, Danielle. Hopefully, we can hear a little bit more about that as well. I want to flag that you have built on this idea of listening and thinking about, there's a lot to listen to. What do we mean by safety? It's physical safety, but it is also emotional safety, digital safety.

Picking up a point that Rosie Hidalgo shared at the outset, thinking about connection. How do people feel connected? Also, thinking about sexual violence and gender-based violence not just as something that happens only between the two people, but that is affected by the environment, by the physical environment, and by things like when do we dismiss students, and how do we think about the structures surrounding school, the infrastructure? All the things that make up a school system, and how can those be used to protect students as they move through the day and after school?

With that, let me turn to Stacy Vaughan. Stacy, you are the Vice President of Programs at the Monique Burr Foundation based in Jacksonville, Florida, whose mission focuses on providing comprehensive, evidence-based prevention programs.

Can you tell us more about the Monique Burr Foundation's Teen Safety Matters program? I understand the program is not singularly through the lens of preventing gender-based violence, but does encompass gender-based violence in its work, so Monique, over to you. Excuse me. Stacy, over to you.

**Stacy Vaughan:**

No problem. Thank you, Suzanne. Yeah. Following up on what the others have talked about, we do provide prevention education because we all know how essential that is. We provide programs pre-K through 12th grade, but our Teen Safety Matters program is focused on middle and high school students. We are a youth-focused prevention organization that provides these programs.

We use a polyvictimization lens. Our programs address multiple types of victimization and violence, so bullying, all types of child abuse, digital dangers, exploitation, and trafficking. Our programs work by educating and empowering youth with safety rules and strategies that they can use in any unsafe situation.

Specifically, regarding gender based violence, while we don't singularly focus on that as a topic in our curricula, we know that many types of victimization disproportionately do affect females, LGBTQ youth, youth that identify as non-binary.

I think it was Danielle that mentioned addressing the root causes in our prevention efforts is really a key strategy to help protect those youth that are most vulnerable. Even in the proposed activities in the U.S. National Action Plan to end gender-based violence that Rosie mentioned, prevention is one of those key components, and so that's where we focus, and in providing those tools to schools.

I think the takeaway for listeners is that there are a lot of great organizations out there doing good work. There are a lot of programs out there that exist, but it really doesn't matter what we're focusing on. We can incorporate strategies that will help protect youth from gender-based violence.

For example, in our experience, even though it's a comprehensive program, we include concepts that have been shown effective in reducing the incidents of gender based violence, which is where we started this webinar with your question, how do we do that?

We talk about healthy relationship skills, communication skills. What are red flag behaviors of abusive behavior? How do we minimize relationship abuse and intimate partner violence? Sexual abuse and sexual assault prevention, and even more basic concepts such as empathy, and consent, and respecting others' boundaries.

Here's an example. One activity we do is that we'll line youth up in two lines across from one another and have one side move toward the other, with the youth on one side showing where to stop. "Where is my personal space and boundaries?" Then, we do the reverse. Then, we'll also shift youth so that they're doing it with multiple other partners. It really does prompt good discussion, but it gives us the opportunity to really cue in on boundaries, consent, and personal space.

We're teaching kids to have a voice and advocate for themselves and their own safety. Through that, we're teaching about things like power, and control, and addressing some of those root causes of not only gender-based violence, but all different types of violence.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Stacy, thank you so much. I think, sometimes, when we think about, "Well, how to do this prevention work? It seems so hard. How do we make a dent?" To take your point, building on the others, there are specific skills, actually, that we can teach and that can be student-led and involve student participation in speaking and identifying their needs and in speaking up.

Now, I'm pleased to turn the conversation to teachers who are in the classroom and with students every day doing this work. I'll turn now to Jennifer Wagner. Jennifer, you are an at-risk interventionist at Cedar Rapids Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

You lead the Mentors in Violence Prevention program at the Cedar Rapids, Kennedy High School, Public Schools, which you've had in place since 2017. Can you tell us about what the program is, and does, and how you do it all? Over to you.

**Jennifer Wagner:**

Hi. Thank you for having me. I'm very excited to be here today to share with you about our Mentors in Violence Prevention team, or MVP for short. In 2016, Cedar Rapids had a lot of gun violence in our youth community and a task force was established. One of the outcomes was to bring MVP to our high schools.

MVP, as a model, has two main components. It is a peer leadership model, so this is led by our students, and then the bystander intervention. We are not focusing on profiling perpetrators, or how not to be a victim, but the likelihood of all of us seeing or knowing something happening potentially dangerous

MVP, as a program, has three goals. We hope to increase awareness, various types of abuse. We are challenging stereotypes, and we are inspiring leadership, and empowering our peers to step in when they see something happening.

Okay. MVP, as a content or curriculum, it really provides two pieces. First, we have the introductory activities, where we work with our students to establish definitions and a framework for the future conversations. That's the first few lessons that we do. Then, the rest of the year we spend talking with our students about different scenarios.

The scenarios are very realistic situations that we know they are experiencing, like spreading rumors or sexual harassment, maybe like cat calling. We talk about teen dating violence, controlling relationships.

When we talk about the scenarios, we have a very consistent lesson plan or structure that we use, and it goes through these main components. I won't read through all of that. The main thing here is that for our students, we really believe that the body can't go where the mind hasn't been. We really want to rehearse, and talk openly, and dialogue with our students on these social situations.

I have an example linked here. I'll just walk you through. One thing that we talk with our students is, if you're with your friend and they are getting a lot of text messages from their boyfriend like, "Who are you with? Where are you at? When are you coming back? When will I see you? Who's all there with you?" Just really holding up these scenarios to our students and saying, "Is this realistic? Has this happened?"

A lot of our leaders will share with the students, "This has happened to me and this is how I handled it," Just really getting those situations that we know they encounter and talking about like, "What's uncomfortable here, and what is healthy or not healthy? If you this is happening, how can you step into that situation?" Because if we don't talk about it, we are afraid people are just disengaging and being paralyzed.

To talk about what we do here at my school, we have our MVP leaders, which we call mentors. They are put in pairs. They're assigned to our freshman homerooms, so we are reaching about 450 kids every year. They have team meetings with me, and then they go into homeroom classrooms each month delivering the content. Then, they also have different school and community outreach opportunities.

For our listeners today, if you were to consider bringing this program to your school, you would want to consider your delivery model. Where in your school calendar and your school day would this fit? You would want to think about a staff or a team who could oversee the program like myself. Think about how your materials would be organized, consider your technology needs, and then schedule the training.

I have some pictures here included. I just want to show you the real work. My team has gone to middle schools to share lessons. We recognize the students at assemblies so that they know they're an important part of our community. We've had leadership summits where our MVP teams meet with other Iowa high school students who are leading the effort.

Then if you do go to my slides later, there are letters from administrators, parents, and students about why MVP is important. I think the biggest thing I'd want to share is that we have built a responsibility to self and others.

The students have learned they have power to influence our community for the better. It has really developed their confidence and passion. The greatest privilege I've had is hearing from our parents, who are just really thankful that we've brought this to school. Thank you.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Thank you so much, Jennifer. I have to say, it's so inspiring to see those photos and to read the letters, so I do encourage people to go ahead and look there.

I think you've talked to us about ... Everybody, in different ways, has talked about the importance of centering the students, because we all know that one of the strongest ways to learn is to do. Engaging the students in, first, listening, but then also leading, and developing the vocabulary, developing the frameworks, learning how to be with their peers is critical to the work.

I'll turn now to Nicole Borghard. You are a social studies teacher at West Potomac High School in Alexandria, Virginia. You sponsor the school's One Love Club, which picks up on some of the themes that we've been talking about.

Can you tell us more about the One Love Club, what its purpose is, how it was brought to the school, what activities the club does to spread awareness about healthy relationships? Let me turn it to you, Nicole.

**Nicole Borghard:**

Hi. Thanks so much for having me. The One Love Foundation was founded after the murder of the UVA lacrosse player, Yeadley Love, in 2010 by her ex-boyfriend. The purpose of the club is to educate students about the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and give them tools to deal with if they're in a relationship that might be unhealthy or someone that they know and care about.

It was brought to our school by ... I teach a leadership class, and at the end of the year I gave them a project. I said, "Pick an issue in the community, research it, and come up with an action plan." One of my students was a freshman at the time. She came upon the statistics about dating violence and decided that this was something she really cared about. She brought it to West Potomac, and asked me to sponsor the club, which I was really happy to because I actually went to UVA, and I had a class with Yeadley Love the semester she was murdered.

I ended up sponsoring the club. Since then, I've done pretty much nothing. It's been all the students doing everything. The main thing that they do is they lead trainings. Their target is different sports teams around the school, the athletic teams.

They train the captains first, and then they have the captains help them train the rest of the team. Then as a culmination, they will have a game that's dedicated to One Love, where the players wear One Love socks or shirts when they're warming up, something like that to bring the whole community into it.

Also, we have monthly meetings. They do fun stuff, like last year when Taylor Swift released her All Too Well 10-minute version video, we watched that as a group, and dissected it, and talked about the different signs in the video. Things like that.

We also do different drives, especially around the holidays, to help families in our community that are affected by domestic violence. It's had a really positive impact on our school culture. I'd say it's a very popular club. My classroom seats about 45 students and when we have meetings, there are kids standing in the back, so that's really awesome and exciting to see.

Many other clubs in our school have started to copy the model of trainings, which has worked really well. Over the past couple years, the students that run the club have trained over 1,000 students at our school, which has been really exciting. I've had students come back and report that they've used the skills they've learned in the club to either help themselves or help someone else.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Fantastic. Thank you, Nicole. I can just picture all of the students crowding into your classroom and the energy in there. It's inspiring to hear about. I think both you and Jennifer, and actually all of our panelists, in different ways, brought in the idea of the culture that is in a school. Because school is not just what happens in the classrooms, as we all well know, or the things that happened in the hallways, but schools have cultures and different parts of schools have their subcultures. The question is how to get in there, and shape them and shape them in affirmative ways that also support prevention of gender-based violence?

I'd like to turn now to each of our panelists and acknowledge that this work is hard, or at least sometimes it can be very hard. Some of the questions we've seen come up in the chat relate to that. Getting people's buy-in, getting students to take these issues seriously.

I want to ask each of you, what challenges have you faced in doing gender-based violence prevention work? What specific steps have you taken, or are you taking, or trying to address those challenges?

Danielle, this time we'll start with you. As a reminder to everybody, Danielle Tuft is the interpersonal and sexual violence prevention unit manager at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Danielle.

**Danielle Tuft:**

Thanks. I'm going to share a little bit about our challenges specifically with hotspot mapping. I think any of you who work in or with schools know that schools are tasked with doing so many things with the limited amount of time that exists in the day, and particularly in a school day. I think we just acknowledge and see that too in the work that we do.

A lot of what we struggle with, sometimes, is finding enough dedicated time, or student access, or even consistent school buy-in, knowing that there are a number of priorities that are constantly shifting in schools and communities that



can all really challenge the ability to get a lot of the information that we need in hotspot mapping, and specifically, to get the information from diverse young people and enough young people across different youth identities.

Some of the things that we really worked on is focusing more time upfront on the partnership and relationship-building that's done with schools. Most of our partners are community-based organizations, and so working with schools and developing those commitments, and ownership, and shared leadership, and shared involvement in all of the different pieces of the activities.

Really understanding what schools need in terms of a report for those recommendations. What level of information do they need to be able to do something with the recommendations that the students are providing with them to actually be accountable to that student information and student data.?

That's a lot of what we've been really focused on, is really building in that time and just acknowledging the importance of community engagement and school engagement, beyond just the tangible activities that exist within our hotspot mapping work.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

That really speaks to this conversation today, which is these are part of the toolkit. It's not just like, "Here's a great way to talk to students about consent, or about healthy relationships, or bystander intervention." It's a big word, but how do we operationalize that? How do we engage school communities so that it is their own?

With that, let me turn, Nicole, back to you. Nicole Borghard from West Potomac High School. What challenges you face and how you're dealing with them?

**Nicole Borghard:**

Sure. At first, when my student brought this to make it a club at the school, there's paperwork you have to fill out, et cetera. She was rejected three times for making this club because they said that it was too sensitive of a topic, teenagers couldn't handle it, et cetera, both at the school and at the county level.

She was very persistent. She's a freshman at Duke now. She got it approved, eventually. Since then, the community has been incredibly supportive. We haven't faced that many challenges. The biggest one, I would say, is sometimes when we train the teams, just getting the students to take it seriously.

Anecdotally, we actually have found that the boys' teams tend to take it more seriously, that they tend to be really engaged. The way we've combated that is by making sure the coaches are in the room, to have that presence and be part of the conversation as well.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Yeah. To pick up on two points you've raised, one is persistence. The work is not easy. If it was easy, we wouldn't be here talking about it today. There's that, and two, the idea that although student leadership is critical, it's not only about the students. It is about the adults, the trusted adults, the adults in leadership roles

who surround the students, who also have a critical role in shaping the culture of the school.

When you think about athletic teams, the leadership is the coach, and so having a coach be there and say, "This is important." I imagine you've had to do a little bit of work, sometimes, getting buy-in from the coaches, but it sounds like that same kind of interpersonal conversation is probably the steps to getting there.

Let me turn now, Jennifer Wagner, to you again from Cedar Rapids, Kennedy High School. Challenges you faced, and how you're addressing them.

**Jennifer Wagner:**

Yep. I would say every year, one of our greatest challenges, and what is most important is that it is student-led, so really having the adults get out of the way and hand over the control. I think a lot of adults in a school setting want to rush in and fix, or rescue, or over-plan, or whatever, but really letting the students have ownership.

Sometimes, they don't plan as much as we would want them to for the homeroom session, and so just talking with them about, "Maybe next time, we can spend more time working with our partners," or if they don't show up because they have an appointment or they forgot. Just having some flexibility, and just really honoring that this needs to be student-led, and we are just there to support them and give them the space.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

As you're talking and talking about planning, that's a life skill. It's a critical skill for all aspects of a student's life to be successful in school. You got to plan. You got to figure out when you're doing your homework, when you're having your free time, and work with others as part of teams.

It really is a reminder. I think, that in some schools, there may be challenges introducing a club or other activities like this, that this is an opportunity not only ... I mean, preventing gender-based violence is, of course, fundamentally important, and the work also reinforces other critically important skills for students at the same time it builds a healthy school culture.

Sydney McKinney, National Black Women's Justice Institute, let me turn to. You were talking with us about the hotspot mapping and the listening that you were doing with administrators and students. What challenges have you faced, and how are you dealing with them?

**Sydney McKinney:**

The primary challenges that we encountered were identifying Black girls to engage in the listening sessions with us. No surprise, it was a little more difficult. We are a virtual organization, so we are actually working in the Midwest doing this over Zoom.

We really relied on our school partners to identify young people, but the places that they went to first were not necessarily the places, the clubs and organizations that Black girls and gender expansive youth were engaged in.

We actually had to develop relationships with organizations within the community that intentionally focus on working with Black girls and gender expansive youth so that we could have a critical mass of young people that we spoke to.

Like Danielle said, I think it's important to be intentional about making sure you have representation when you are speaking to young people. Sometimes, you have to go the extra mile to actually find the organizations that can help you speak to the young people you most need to speak to. That was something that was important for us to do.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

It sounds like it also picks up on the theme. Whether you're a teacher, or administrator, or a community-based organization, or foundation, or working with the state, how to forge the connections that help the work on the ground.

Again, it sounds like it goes back to fundamentals. Both persistence, and listening, and hearing, and then taking next steps, and a continuous feedback loop of listening, learning, and building on that knowledge.

Stacy Vaughan with the Monique Burr Foundation, what about you? What kind of challenges are you facing, and how are you dealing with them?

**Stacy Vaughan:**

Yeah. The biggest challenge, Suzanne, that we, I think, typically see in our partnership with schools is them finding classroom time to do primary prevention activities. They're tasked with so much, and the academic standards, and the testing. Then we're telling them through either mandates or just through our work, "You need to add this, and do this, and we need to educate youth, and we need to educate staff," and so where do they find the time?

I think because of that, some schools resort to a check the box mentality. "Let me just do something that's simple and easy so I can make sure I meet this mandate," and that doesn't always work. We know that during the formative years of youth, and particularly girls, they're faced with a lot of messages and experiences that undermine their autonomy and their self-esteem, and those kinds of violations happen frequently.

The answers are not simple. The solutions are complex and comprehensive, but we all have to somehow work together to make sure that kids are getting what they need in order to be educated and empowered to address this.

There's a lot of great resources out there. There's good reports that direct us to what we need to be doing as far as what works in prevention, and a lot of great activities and resources that middle schools and high schools and beyond, younger and older can access resources to help them do that in a really efficient and effective way.

**Suzanne Goldberg:**

Yeah, thank you. I want to remind everybody to treat this webinar as a resource. All of the links that have been shared throughout and that will be posted on the webpage for this webinar are all resources for your own toolkits.

A second point to pick up on that you've just raised, and I think it's important to acknowledge that sometimes, a way of dealing with the challenge is to recognize that this is challenging work. That's not the endpoint. It's important to recognize because when we can think about, "Well, what are the challenges?" and start to use something that, I think you said earlier, think about, "Well, what are the root causes of these challenges?"

Maybe there's not a resistance to prevention work. Maybe it's there's a lot going on in the school. How can we help this fit with other pieces that the school community is also interested in working on, or feels compelled to work on, or is compelled to work on?

All right. We have one more lightning round for you that again, picks up on some of the questions from the chat and some of our conversation so far. I'm going to tuck in a general question, which is, since you talked about resources, if everybody, in addition to responding to what I'm about to ask you, wants to mention a resource, a single resource that has been really helpful to you in your work, I'd welcome that.

Stacy, let's come right back to you. I want to go back to something you mentioned earlier. You talked about polyvictimization. Can you just remind us, what is that? It's a big word. What is polyvictimization, and how does it intersect with gender-based violence?

**Stacy Vaughan:**

It is, and we don't hear it a lot. It really defines when someone experiences multiple types of victimization. Not someone that's sexually abused multiple times, but they experience sexual abuse, they experience harassment, they experience bullying or physical abuse.

It's really quite common in our country, and there have been studies that document how common it is. For us, our takeaway, the implications from that research have been that, instead of working in silos, we need to be looking comprehensively at all the different types of victimization that youth are experiencing. We all need to be working together to address the root causes and the pathways that lead to that.

For us, in our prevention work, really what that has led us to is, what are those strategies that we can teach youth that they can apply in any unsafe situation? For schools, as you said, how do we give them resources and work with what they've already been doing? What health instruction standards do they have to meet?

One comprehensive program like MBF Teen Safety Matters can help them meet multiple health instruction standards in a very easy manner. We are saving them time, and in that regard, I think it's a good resource for schools to be able to access.

**Suzanne Goldberg:** Underscoring the point, this work doesn't happen alone. I also want to flag that the work happens in the digital space, digital safety as well as physical safety and emotional support.

Nicole Borghard from West Potomac, tell us, talk to us, lightning round quick. How can students get more involved in preventing gender-based violence in schools?

**Nicole Borghard:** Sure. This is advice I'd give to students wanting to be involved in any topic. Essentially, to take ownership of it, start something, and to raise awareness. Something that I think is important in high schoolers, if they really want to make change, is to make it their focus. A lot of high schoolers spread themselves really thin in a lot of different clubs, and activities, and things like that.

My student that started One Love, she did other things, but she made her high school career One Love. She's now doing it in college and stuff too, and it really helped her. She was able to write her college essays about it, and all that kind of stuff. I think just really taking the topic and running with it is really important.

In terms of a resource, we get most of our curriculum, and et cetera, from [joinonelove.org](http://joinonelove.org).

**Suzanne Goldberg:** Great. Thank you so much for sharing this about your student. I'm sure that will be motivating to many students, to just be able to not only have a passion in mind, but to carry it out in a way even that has a lasting impact on a school. It's quite remarkable.

Jenny Wagner, Cedar Rapids. Talk to us about what should we look for in a teacher or staff member when deciding who can lead gender-based violence programming? What should schools be looking for, from your experience?

**Jennifer Wagner:** I would say, this is for the students too, someone who has a personal passion, maybe for violence prevention. Someone who is genuinely connected and invested in the work.

It really helps to be organized. It really helps to not be discouraged when technology doesn't work or a conversation with students doesn't go so well. Just always keeping your eye on the goal and the value of the work that you're doing.

Then I would say someone who's committed, because this is like a year-long process and it continues. We've been doing it for five years, so someone who's committed, organized, and genuinely connected to this work.

**Suzanne Goldberg:** That is great. Did you have a resource you wanted to jump in onto?

**Jennifer Wagner:** Oh. I would always say the children. I think that they tell us what conversations they would like to have. Whenever we get discouraged, they are always ready

with like, "Oh, I had this great conversation with my class, and I really think the freshmen were thinking," so I would definitely say the kids.

**Suzanne Goldberg:** Yeah. I think what you're saying is also a reminder that when the work seems so hard, it's a reminder that, actually, every day something changes. It takes the engagement and involvement. It may change one conversation at a time, but if we're not having those conversations, it doesn't change. Each of these pieces, the big, and the small, and the medium-size, all feed into creating a culture of gender-based violence prevention at schools.

With that, let me turn back to Sydney McKinney from the National Black Women's Justice Institute, and ask you, picking up on where you started, why is it important that we use an intersectional framework when we're designing interventions, or schools are thinking about designing interventions and responses to gender-based violence in K-12 schools?

**Sydney McKinney:** Well, it's incredibly important that we use an intersectional framework. By that, I mean one that really considers the ways in which a policy, or practice, or program may impact young people of different identities differently.

We assume that a policy will impact everyone the same way, but we know that's not actually the case. We have so many stories, unfortunately, in the news of Black girls who are harmed at school. It starts because of dress code violations. The dress code policy is the problem. It's because it's not taking into consideration how different people's bodies look differently, and different clothes.

We actually have to take this time to look at our policies and assess, how will it impact young people's of different groups? If we're recognizing or observing the potential for differential treatment, then we need to rethink our policies.

The solution, I think, is actually to engage young people. I think we've all said that, but young people really know how to make a school safe. I think we need to be looking to them to tell us, "How do we create policies that create safety for you?" and allow them to hold us accountable to them.

**Suzanne Goldberg:** Thank you. Certainly, our own ... Oh, sorry. Did you have a quick resource you wanted to share, in addition?

**Sydney McKinney:** Just the young people. They're brilliant. We don't need any other resources. I agree with Jennifer.

**Suzanne Goldberg:** Thank you. I think also, just for really putting a spotlight on each of these students as a whole human being, and everybody, each of us, we all go through the world differently, and having different experiences based on our background, based on our race, gender, disability, all the different factors that make us who we are.

As students, in particular, are trying to figure out who they are in the world, being seen, and being supported, and recognizing how we can create a culture to support them, and a safe culture with the protective factors, going back to an earlier part of the conversation, both in the physical space and in the digital space is, I think, one of the greatest gifts that school environments, that each of us, whatever our role, in or outside of a school, can do for the future of our nation.

I want to give each of our speakers an enormous thank you. I wish we were in a room together. We would all be giving you a standing ovation. I want to remind all of our attendees about the links, and also to share out this video. If you found some tools that are useful for you, please share this with others so that we can help engage every school across the country in this work.

The resources, as you know, and that you'll see on the website are provided for your convenience. They're not endorsed by the Department. They're not necessarily a reflection of departmental policies or positions. What they are is an offer for you for your toolkit.

I hope you feel your toolkit is enriched after the conversation today. I know mine is. Thank you so much for joining us today. I will now turn back to our colleagues from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Thank you so much.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank all of you. We greatly appreciate that wisdom that was shared by each of you as speakers. I was particularly pleased to hear that there's so much student involvement, and that the students themselves are defining what the safe environment should look like, and feel like, and offer to them to support their safety, so thank you so much for all of that.

I also want to thank all of the people who are online with us for this webinar. We had so many people come in with great questions. Those questions, if they were not responded to by our speakers today, they will get passed on to the Department, and they do inform upcoming resources and offerings that we bring back to you.

I want to remind everyone that you can visit the NCSSE website at [safesupportivelearning.ed.gov](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov), to be able to gather information from the event webpage for today's event, and to look at other resources.

For those of you who are coming to us from higher education, please know that one of the recorded Lessons From the Field webinars from September focused on this very topic for the higher education sector, so we really encourage you to watch that webinar as well, and look at the resources associated with that community.

We want to also let folks know that the Best Practices Clearinghouse is another place to go get resources. Upcoming this month, we have another Lessons From the Field on November 30th, which will be focusing in on how school

environments can support the unique needs of young people and students who are running away or contemplating runaway, or who might be homeless. That's November 30th. December 14th, we'll be offering a webinar that is focused on how we can prevent and intervene in student vaping, and try to increase their health.

Again, we want to thank everybody for attending today and for being here with us. We want to offer the opportunity for each and every one of you to give us some feedback by clicking the link that's in the chat to the feedback form. We take your feedback seriously. It helps to inform our webinar series, and it helps us to continually improve for you.

Also, one more big thank you on all of those icons that are flying up the screen. Our speakers really appreciate that kind of feedback as well. We hope you have a wonderful rest of the day, and we'll leave the link up for you for a while so that you can click on it and provide feedback. Thank you.