



RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Addressing the Violence Before It Starts

Domestic Violence Primary Prevention Plan



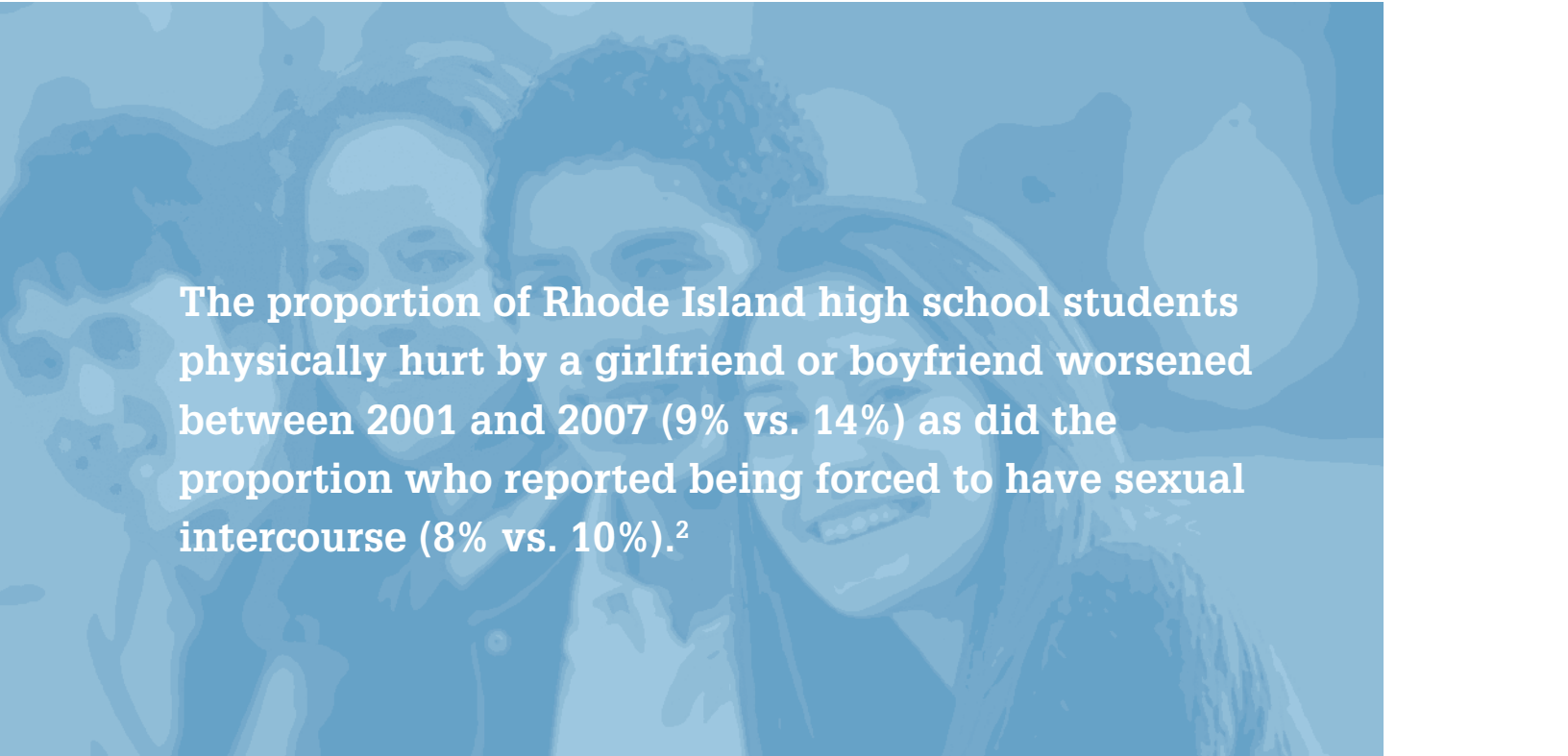
preventing

Our goal is to help Rhode Island move one step closer to preventing domestic violence in our communities.

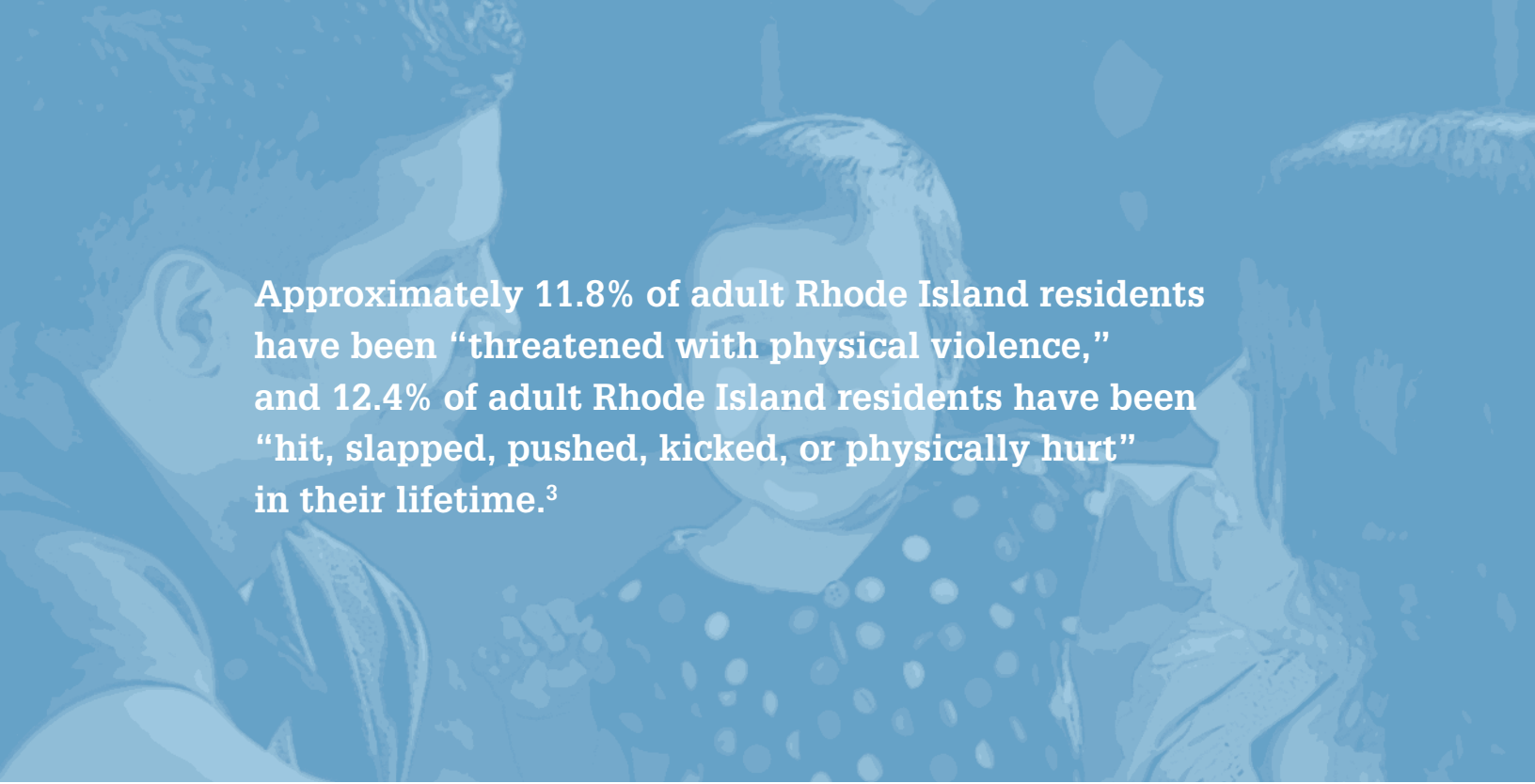
Members of the Rhode Island State Steering Committee (SSC) developed this domestic violence primary prevention plan as the first step in a long-term process to alter cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that support domestic violence.

As part of the DELTA Project (Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement Leadership Through Alliances), the Rhode Island SSC **identified evidence-informed prevention strategies targeting men and teens.** Ways to improve community-based organizations' and community members' ability to use and evaluate these prevention strategies are also part of this plan.

Rhode Island is well positioned to lead a concerted effort to prevent domestic violence. We have an established network of domestic violence services, laws that address victim safety and perpetrator accountability, and a history of working collaboratively to address social justice and public health concerns. One in four Rhode Islanders is affected by domestic violence.¹ Every Rhode Islander has a role to play in preventing it.



The proportion of Rhode Island high school students physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend worsened between 2001 and 2007 (9% vs. 14%) as did the proportion who reported being forced to have sexual intercourse (8% vs. 10%).²



Approximately 11.8% of adult Rhode Island residents have been “threatened with physical violence,” and 12.4% of adult Rhode Island residents have been “hit, slapped, pushed, kicked, or physically hurt” in their lifetime.³

Why target youth and men?

In RI, **78% of domestic violence offenders were male**.⁴ While it’s true that the majority of domestic violence perpetrators in Rhode Island are men, it is also true that **most** Rhode Island men are non-violent. Most men who are not violent are not sure how to help, and remain silent in the face of other men’s violence. One in three men do not actively support community efforts to stop violence against women because no one had asked them to get involved or they do not know how to help.⁵ The SSC recognized that **engaging men in prevention will likely shift unhealthy cultural attitudes and norms around violence and gender.**

In order to help shape healthy norms and attitudes, RI also needs to start working with youth as early as possible. After reviewing the available data, it was clear that adolescents were already experiencing violence in their own dating relationships and that **intervening when youth are forming or about to establish their dating relationships is critical.** RI needs to promote social competencies and positive identities for all Rhode Island youth. The acquisition of skills like decision-making and peaceful conflict resolution may serve as protective factors⁶ for domestic violence victimization and perpetration for youth. School administrators and faculty, and community-based organizations that serve youth and parents will need information and training on teen dating violence prevention, healthy relationships, and changing social norms and attitudes.

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What are we going to accomplish?

Rhode Island prevention capacity system goals

- Expand the capacity of existing domestic violence prevention programs to engage in primary prevention through training and technical assistance
- Increase the number of evidence-informed domestic violence primary prevention programs in RI
- Facilitate coalition building among violence prevention practitioners and facilitate partnerships between evaluation researchers and local practitioners
- Improve state data collection systems' accessibility, increasing the proportion of community-based violence prevention practitioners, who report that they have used state data for prevention program planning purposes

Goals targeting adult men

- Decrease the perception that masculinity includes violent behavior
- Encourage bystanders to intervene by promoting the use of evidence-informed strategies targeting men
- Cultivate male champions to publicly challenge traditional gender norms

Goals targeting Rhode Island youth ages 12-18 years old

- Increase the social competencies⁷ of Rhode Island youth
- Promote the integration of dating violence primary prevention concepts in existing school-based strategies
- Disseminate education and training materials on promoting healthy relationships and on social norms change activities to RI youth groups, community-based organizations, after-school programs, and camps

What can you do to prevent domestic violence?

Strategies for working with men

- **White Ribbon Campaign:** This campaign entails a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls.
- **Men 2B:** This program is designed to build men's capacity to be confident, effective role models for youth, based on the concept that all men are role models in their communities, whether they realize it or not.
- **MOST Clubs:** This 16-week curriculum targets high school and young men, addressing relationship and individual level risk factors to prevent sexual violence.



To get involved in these initiatives or for more information, contact the Director of Prevention at (401) 467-9940 or ricadv@ricadv.org

Strategies for working with youth 12 and older

- **Close to Home Social Norms Change Activities:** This strategy involves participatory research projects like youth digital stories, street hollering⁸ research projects, awareness raising activities like parades, and web-based outreach through social networking activities.
- **Safe Dates:** This school-based program for middle and high school students involves an evidenced based 9-session curriculum, a play performed by students, and a poster contest.
- **SADA (Students Against Domestic Abuse):** SADA is a Newport, RI primary prevention strategy based on STAR: Southside Teens About Respect, incorporating positive youth development theory, prevention principles, youth leadership and activism.
- **Young Men's Work and Young Women's Lives:** These two curricula, developed by Paul Kivel, provide young men and women with communication, problem solving, and healthy relationship skills while they examine gender norms, oppressions, and the roots of male violence.

Strategies for building RI's prevention system capacity

- The SSC will support the development of primary prevention guidelines, training and technical assistance.
- The SSC will identify and conduct outreach to violence prevention practitioners in the state regarding training needs in the area of primary prevention and evaluation.
- The SSC will also promote the use of coalition building across violence prevention practitioners as evidence supports the effectiveness of coalitions in creating change.

Next steps

Over the course of the next 3 to 5 years, the SSC will offer trainings and technical assistance to help promote local use of these recommended strategies. To supplement these trainings, technical assistance will be offered to communities when adapting some of these strategies by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

The SSC is in the process of developing an evaluation plan for the goals highlighted in this overview. Since we have invested so much time in developing this domestic violence primary prevention plan and recommendations for moving forward, we want to make sure we have a way to measure our progress and capture lessons learned.

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FOOTNOTES: 1. National Violence Against Women Survey 2000; 2. RI Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2007; 3. RI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2005; 4. RI Supreme Court DV Monitoring Unit 2009; 5. Family Violence Prevention Fund 2000; 6. Protective factors are associated with decreasing the likelihood of violence perpetration; 7. Social competencies encompass planning and decision-making skills, interpersonal competence (e.g., friendship and dating relationship skills), cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution skills; 8. Street hollering is the act of trying to pick someone up or flirt with them on the street.



For additional information and report copies:
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