



Basics of Prevention

The term “prevention” describes *approaches, programs, or strategies designed to promote healthy environments and behaviors and to prevent unhealthy environments and behaviors*. Intimate partner violence prevention, sexual violence prevention, and dating violence prevention are just that – strategies to reduce the perpetration of these types of violence.

Levels of Prevention

There are three levels of prevention:

1. Primary prevention describes approaches, programs, or strategies designed to prevent violence **before violence occurs**;
2. Secondary prevention describes approaches, programs, or strategies designed to deal with the short-term consequences of violence and to prevent further violence **immediately following a violent incident**;
3. Tertiary prevention describes approaches, programs, or strategies designed to deal with the long-term consequences of violence and to prevent future violence **long after violence has occurred**.

Target Audiences

Prevention strategies target three types of audiences:

1. A **universal** audience includes everyone, regardless of risk. (Learn more about the risk and protective factors of violence at the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).)
2. A **selected** audience includes people who have a heightened risk of victimization or perpetration.
3. An **indicated** audience includes people who have been victimized or have perpetrated violence.

By definition, primary prevention efforts are typically geared towards a universal or selected audience. Secondary and tertiary prevention efforts are typically geared towards an indicated audience. However, some primary prevention efforts target “at-risk” groups or a more indicated audience.

One benefit to primary prevention with universal audiences is the ability to facilitate change in large segments of society.