Capacity building for community-level prevention: Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

Practitioners and Advocates Featured:

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PreventConnect
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When the CEO of the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), Julie Donelon started in her role, she was interested and driven to elevate the organization's efforts to prevent sexual assault. The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence's emphasis on prevention was helpful in setting this direction. MOCSA's CEO went through their Director's Academy which included specific training around building capacity for prevention. With deliberate attention to prevention, MOCSA has gone from a focus on counselling, its crisis line, advocacy and education, to also including activities related to community-level prevention.

FROM VISIONING TO ACTION

MOCSA first held a visioning session to determine what the agency wanted to do and how they would do it. "Things from this meeting really came to life," says Melanie Austin, the organization's director of education. MOCSA went through a strategic planning process, spoke with funders about supporting prevention work, and educated board members and staff. "There was a shift from a feminist outlook to also including public health approaches to violence prevention," says Melanie. This entailed detangling the differences between individual education and population/community level work and developing work on both levels. MOCSA shifted its mission to intentionally include prevention: MOCSA exists to improve the lives of those impacted by sexual assault and abuse, and to prevent sexual violence in our community.

CREATING A WORKFORCE FOR PREVENTION

Prior to expanding prevention programs at MOCSA, Melanie managed five education and outreach specialists. Today, she has a total of 12 staff. For recruitment and hiring, MOCSA started a bachelor's level internship program for the education department, created part-time positions for education in school-based work, included primary prevention information in volunteer training, revamped job descriptions to include prevention, and developed a community-level prevention position.

NEW CAPACITY FOR PREVENTION, NEW COMMUNITY LEVEL WORK

With a commitment to prevention and appropriate staffing, MOCSA has been able to engage in multisector prevention efforts in Wyandotte County. Working with community partners, such as residents, the health department, school district, police, social service providers, and more, MOCSA has helped expand their focus from education-only to also including community-level prevention. Through the Wyandotte County Sexual Assault Prevention Coalition, partners conducted a needs assessment in the community to identify environmental factors that contribute to residents feeling unsafe. The coalition then created a community prevention plan to address needs around fostering safer neighborhoods, promoting community connectedness, and addressing cultural norms around violence.



Wyandotte County Sexual Assault Prevention Coalition includes partners from a range of sectors focused on preventing violence in the community.

Overall, differentiating prevention from education has been vital to MOCSA's work. An increased internal capacity to prevent sexual violence before it happens has enabled MOCSA to leverage other violence prevention work in the community and work together toward the shared goal of a safer community free of multiple forms of violence.

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RESOURCES

- MOCSA's website
- Prevention Institute's Collaboration Multiplier Tool:
- Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence

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