

Domestic Violence Advisory Group

Vision, Mission, Background & Priorities

Vision

Every Vermonter lives in a home and community that is free from domestic violence and the oppressions on which it is based.

Mission

The mission of the Vermont Department of Health Domestic Violence Advisory Group (DVAG) is to increase the capacity of the Department of Health to engage in and support activities that prevent and respond to domestic violence in our workplace, in public health settings, and in Vermont communities.

The DVAG aims to address the root causes of domestic violence using a public health approachⁱ to work in partnership across divisions and with other State agencies and community partners to inform and support the implementation of policies and coordinated activities. The DVAG is guided by four commitments: 1) trauma-informed,ⁱⁱ 2) evidence-informed, 3) culturally competent, and 4) addresses both supports for victims and holds perpetrators accountable.

Background

The Vermont Health Department recognizes that domestic violenceⁱⁱⁱ is a highly prevalent public health problem with devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. In order to achieve the long term goal of preventing domestic violence, a multifaceted approach needs to be taken. Primary prevention is a systematic process that promotes safe and healthy environments and behaviors, reducing the likelihood or frequency of an incident, injury, or condition occurring^{iv}. Effective prevention must change the environmental factors of social inequality and gender-based oppression that dramatically shape behavior and attitudes and maintain social norms which tolerate and perpetuate domestic and sexual violence.

The work of the DVAG is focused around four main areas:

1) Partnerships & Community Capacity Building

- Engaging in community education and social marketing
- Developing partnerships, supporting technical assistance, and applying multidisciplinary approaches in coordination with communities, local Domestic Violence Programs, and Offices of Local Health
- Collaborating across child and adult service systems

2) Data & Research

- Monitoring violence-related injuries to enhance collection and dissemination of public health data related to domestic violence
- Disseminating research on effective prevention strategies, tools, and resources

3) Public Health Workforce Development & Training

- Working across all divisions within the Health Department to increase the understanding of the role of public health in the prevention of and response to domestic violence
- Ensuring that public health professionals and health care providers are trained to identify and respond to domestic violence
- Promoting workplace health and safety and ensuring that all Vermont Department of Health staff are trained to prevent, identify and respond to domestic violence through resources, referral and response

4) Policies & Protocols

- Coordinating with and supporting statewide AHS prevention priorities
- Developing protocols and policies within the Health Department and AHS to respond to domestic violence in the workplace, as well as supporting policies at the local, state, and national level

ⁱ *A Prevention Primer for Domestic Violence: Terminology, Tools, and the Public Health Approach*, Linda Chamberlain with contributions from Julie Ann Rivers-Cochran
vawnet.org/applied-research-papers/print-document.php?doc_id=1313

The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention,
cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/publichealthapproach.html

ⁱⁱ humanservices.vermont.gov/policy-legislation/policies/01-general-operations-policies/1-07-ahs-trauma-informed-system-of-care/view

ⁱⁱⁱ The Vermont Department of Health defines domestic violence, also called *intimate partner violence*, as a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans and many Vermonters. Domestic violence is a pattern of assault and coercive behaviors that may include actual or threatened physical injury and sexual assault, psychological abuse, economic coercion and various other tactics. These behaviors are perpetrated by someone who is, was, or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent, are aimed at establishing control by one partner over the other, and result in an atmosphere of fear and/or terror for the victim.

This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy. Domestic violence can vary in frequency and severity. Perpetrators of domestic violence use a variety of different tactics to control their victim. These behaviors exist along a continuum and an abuser may never actually physically hurt their victim, but that doesn't mean that domestic violence isn't happening.

healthvermont.gov/dvsv/domestic_violence.aspx

^{iv} *Poised for Prevention Strategy: Advancing Promising Approaches to Primary Prevention of Intimate Partner Violence*, Prevention Institute, 2007. ncdsv.org/images/Poised%20for%20Prevention.pdf