Communities First
A PROJECT ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION: COHORT 1, 2018
Communities First
Preventing Sexual Violence in Minnesota

The following is the result of the work of Casa de Esperanza, Hmong American Partnership, Minnesota Men and Masculine Folks Network, OutFront Minnesota, and Women of Nations, and produced in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention Program, within the Violence Prevention Programs Unit.

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Introduction

Marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by sexual violence.\(^1\) The voices of those most affected by sexual violence are often the least heard, but it is vital for us to listen. The field of public health has developed models to guide effective prevention strategies, including the Spectrum of Prevention and the Social Ecological Model (see Appendices A and B).\(^2,3\) While these prevention models have helped steer the field toward a better understanding of primary prevention, there is still a need to be inclusive of key community perspectives and contexts. It is critical for large institutions, to listen to, learn from, and support community experts if sexual violence prevention efforts are to succeed in reducing disparities.

Communities are unique and complex, and a prevention strategy that works in one community may not transfer easily to others. Communities are the most qualified to determine what effective sexual violence prevention strategies look like for themselves. Communities are experts in their own needs and readiness. To this end, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in partnership with selected communities, has begun a process of listening and learning to ensure that key community voices are heard, called Communities First. We include the work of five organizations, Cohort 1, who recently held stakeholder listening sessions in communities across Minnesota. Their findings, insights, and recommendations for those working in prevention, including policy makers and funders, are included.

Cohort 1 was a pilot project to prompt community-based organizations to ask their stakeholders the question, “What does sexual violence prevention look like in our community?” Each of the five organizations conducted three to five listening sessions with stakeholders they identified as essential in beginning these conversations. This was a fast-paced, three-month process. While there were some similarities across communities’ responses, cultural practices and nuances need to be highlighted and understood for prevention efforts to be successful. For some communities, even discussing the topic of sexual violence is considered taboo while in other communities, sexual violence has been a much discussed reality but with more of an intervention/response frame, rather than a prevention frame.

The MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program would like to thank Cohort 1 for taking this journey with us and leading the way on what is possible. Cohort 1’s contributions have strengthened our collective understanding of what can work and what does not work in sexual violence prevention, and they have paved the way for this process to continue. Our deepest gratitude to Casa de Esperanza, Hmong American Partnership, Minnesota Men and Masculine Folks Network, OutFront Minnesota, and Women of Nations, and we look forward to continuing this journey in partnership.

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Casa de Esperanza

Casa de Esperanza is a Latin@ organization founded in 1982 to provide emergency shelter for Latinas and their children fleeing domestic violence. Today, we are a national organization that remains grounded in our local communities. Our Minnesota initiatives, informed and reflective of the voices and realities of Latin@s, include family advocacy and community engagement.

Casa de Esperanza is The National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities Center designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As a national resource center, Casa de Esperanza is a member of a nationwide network that works to support prevention and intervention efforts across the country to end domestic violence. National initiatives consist of research, public policy, training, and technical assistance.

Recommendations based on community listening sessions

Prevention plan for Casa de Esperanza:
- Increase internal sexual violence prevention capacity.
- Increase individual and community knowledge of sexual violence.
- Begin developing a culturally specific coalition on sexual violence.

Recommendations for sexual violence prevention professionals:
- Review policies and protocols for sexual violence prevention in schools (led by Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Department of Health).

Recommendations for policymakers and funders:
- Require mandated sexual violence prevention training and policies for business owners, with technical assistance and training from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and state anti-violence coalitions.
- Provide yearly sexual violence prevention training for new businesses/employees through organizations providing small business loans to minority owned small businesses.

Recommendations for data collectors, evaluators, researchers, or epidemiologists:
- Methods used to collect data should be developed with the input from community members and/or community based organizations.
- Use concepts that reflect the complexity and diversity of the Latino community.

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4 The term Latin@ is a gender neutral alternative to Latino.
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- Prioritize the use of community based participatory research (CBPR).6

Recommendations for schools and community programs:
- Yearly sexual violence training for teachers and liaisons as well as parent engagement.
- Development of sexual violence policies for schools, including safety plans.
- Integrate sexual violence prevention into community classes, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults, or into community classes for new parents.

Community Listening Sessions

The focus groups
- School liaisons
- Business owners
- Casa de Esperanza staff

What Casa de Esperanza did
- Casa de Esperanza used the Three Siblings Story, a prevention parable that explains the importance of preventing harm before it occurs (See Appendix C), and the adapted ecological model that fits the realities of the Latino community (see Appendix D).7
- Participants engaged in listening session style discussion.
- Questions focused on programs and policies rather than personal experiences.

What Casa de Esperanza heard
- The media perpetrates sexual violence, and neither families nor schools properly address the topic.
- Existing school training and policies regarding sexual violence are insufficient and not culturally responsive.
- Community and family discussions on healthy sexuality, relationships, sexual violence, accountability, and gender norms could help prevent sexual violence.
- Culturally specific approaches to sexual violence are necessary in the criminal justice system, social services, and education.

Hmong American Partnership

Hmong American Partnership is a nonprofit community based organization focused on empowering the refugee and immigrant community by moving our clients out of poverty and towards social and financial prosperity.

Over 15 years, we have built a strong history of working with sexually assaulted youth and women in the Hmong community. Traditional Hmong culture is based on a patriarchal structure that values the family, the clan, and the common good over the needs of individuals. Hmong American Partnership’s program activities address the complex, multi-layered challenges that victims face when attempting to access services. Our programming fills an important gap in services for culturally and linguistically based services for the Hmong community, which is not available through mainstream services.

Recommendations based on community listening sessions

Prevention plan for Hmong American Partnership:
- Conduct an internal staff survey on sexual violence prevention.
- Continue discussions on sexual violence prevention with support groups, and train the adult participants to facilitate conversations about the Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence, which is a tool created by the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (see Appendix E).8

Recommendations for sexual violence prevention professionals:
- Educate educators.
- Educate children.
- Get men involved.
- Improve cultural community competency.

Recommendations for policymakers and funders:
- Incorporate sexual violence prevention programs in schools.

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Community Listening Sessions

The focus groups

- Girls aged 8-24 years old
- Adult women aged 25 years and older
- Hmong American Partnership Children and Family Services staff

What Hmong American Partnership did

- Hmong American Partnership facilitated discussion using the Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence created by the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence.
- Small groups discussed how cultural and traditional practices justify gender-based violence and inequality.
- The Three Siblings Story was used to discussion prevention (see appendix C).
- We asked the groups, “What would a perfect world look like without violence? What would need to happen to create this world?”

What we heard

- Adult women shared more ideas based on personal experiences.
- The youth had more community level solutions.
- Poverty was identified by multiple groups as a risk factor for sexual violence.
- Discussing privilege was uncomfortable for men who participated.
Men and Masculine Folks Network

Men and Masculine Folks Network started in the summer of 2016 as a collaborative of individuals and organizations that engage men, boys, and masculine identities as a strategy to help end gender-based violence. Our mission is to foster and create a hub where men and masculine folks from diverse communities and organizations across Minnesota are connected and moving towards a collective goal of ending gender-based violence. We believe that for there to be collective impact towards ending gender-based violence in Minnesota, every community must be involved and supported. Towards this end, it means that men, masculine and male-identified folks must be engaged as a strategy towards ending gender-based violence. In order to do this, these folks must have a hub where they can learn from each other about promising or evolving practices; lift up community-driven solutions; have the necessary tools and skills to engage men and masculine folks with technical support; participate in capacity building trainings; and understand how the issues of gender-based violence manifest in the different communities in Minnesota.

Recommendations based on community listening sessions

Prevention plan for Men and Masculine Folks Network:

- Create sexual violence prevention video campaign featuring men and victim/survivors from different cultures and ethnicities.
- Hold community screenings to show videos and facilitate conversations on prevention.
- Continue community listening sessions.

Recommendations for sexual violence prevention professionals:

- Use or create prevention models that are responsive to youth
- Use prevention models that are responsive to communities that are not focused on the individual, but rather have a collective focus.
- Train sexual violence professionals on prevention models.

Recommendations for policymakers and funders:

- Government officials need to speak out more publicly about sexual violence.
- More practices and policies of accountability are needed with government officials.
- Work to address the power dynamics that exist in society between different groups.
- Increase appreciation of the diversity of identities and groups.
- Provide more prevention dollars and funds to support prevention organizing efforts and specifically direct it to community groups that have not been traditionally funded.
- Prevention does not always look the same. Funders must appreciate the nuances of prevention based on how it looks in different communities and allow for differences.
Recommendations for data collectors, evaluators, researchers, or epidemiologists:

- Continually understand the nuances of specific communities and not group people into the general cultural groups of Black, Latino, Asian, etc.
- Information shared back to the community should be accessible for people to understand and relate to so that it can help them move beyond their individual ideas and thoughts and also so that people can see that their stories and experiences matter in data collection.

Community Listening Sessions

The focus groups

- Southeast Asian men and masculine folks from ManForward
- Teen boys involved in the SunRice St. Project
- Men and masculine folks in the greater community, co-hosted with the Greater Mankato United Way and the Committee Against Domestic Abuse

What the Men and Masculine Folks Network did

- The Men and Masculine Folks Network facilitator presented the Spectrum of Prevention and the Social Ecological Model (see Appendices A and B).
- Discussions focused on strategies to prevent sexual violence from each level of the Spectrum of Prevention.

What the Men and Masculine Folks Network heard

- Every group discussed the importance of conversations and awareness around consent.
- Participants spoke of a need for community based accountability for sexual violence.
- Prevention models should include families for communities who are collectively (vs. individually) orientated.
- Create community support spaces and safety spaces for peer support for young people.
- Male leaders need to speak out and address these issues and provide healthy models of masculinity for younger men and boys.
- Men must work to support women to be in more powerful leadership roles and be allies against sexist behavior.
- Participants shared a desire to break from traditional gender roles early on in childhood and celebrate differences within genders.
- Schools must work closely with parents to improve prevention in schools.
- Ensure children have supportive and healthy adults in their lives.
- Strengthen networks to support groups who are raising awareness.
OutFront Minnesota

OutFront Minnesota's Anti-Violence Program is a broad-based effort to end violence and harassment against and within LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) communities in Minnesota. We work in collaboration with survivors and community members to build safety and power - as well as opportunities for support and healing - through crisis intervention services, systems advocacy, counseling, community education, and outreach. We believe that everyone deserves safety from harm regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. From the individual to the community to the state, ending violence and harassment requires social change at every level, and we work toward this end by:

- Increasing awareness, visibility, and knowledge of the violence and harassment that our community members experience;
- Collaborating with survivors in finding their own paths to healing and empowerment through safe and effective support services; and
- Partnering with other organizations across the state to create a strong network of well-trained and inclusive service providers throughout Minnesota.

Recommendations based on community listening sessions

Prevention recommendations for the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Sexual Violence Prevention Program:

- Publicize work around sexual violence prevention.
- Increase engagement and outreach to LGBTQ populations.
- Ensure MDH staff are trained and conversant in LGBTQ identities.

Recommendations for sexual violence prevention professionals:

- Host listening sessions with the LGBTQ community, led by and for LGBTQ people.
- Assess websites, materials, etc. to ensure LGBTQ inclusivity.
- If doing prevention work, ensure they are reaching LGBTQ populations.
- If doing school education, include information on rates of LGBTQ sexual violence.

Recommendations for policymakers and funders:

- Review existing data and reports.
- Conduct follow up with LGBTQ populations.
- Mandate K-12 education on healthy relationships, autonomy, and consent.
- Create free after school programs relating to healthy relationships.
- Provide LGBTQ specific funding to mainstream service providers.
- Provide funding to LGBTQ communities directly to do prevention work.
- Funders should be trained and conversant on LGBTQ identities.
Recommendations for data collectors, evaluators, researchers, or epidemiologists:

- Increase studies of LGBTQ people and sexual violence.
- Increase studies of LGBTQ people and primary prevention.
- Analyze data by sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Recognize non-binary and fluid identities.

Recommendations for community programs:

- All organizations should have consistent and clear LGBTQ inclusivity training.
- Campuses should prioritize LGBTQ inclusion and LGBTQ affinity groups in athletics and Greek life. GLSEN, an LGBTQ student advocacy organization, conducted a survey which found that LGBTQ student groups improve school and campus climate and safety for all students, not just LGBTQ students.9
- Organizations should have strong anti-discrimination policies, including explanations of and prohibitions against any sexual harassment and unwanted contact.

Community Listening Sessions

The focus groups

- Campus focus group co-hosted by The Queer Student Cultural Center and the Aurora Center at the University of Minnesota
- LGBTQ community conversations hosted at Sabathani Community Center
- Informal forum with burlesque community

What OutFront MN did

- OutFront MN facilitators shared The Three Siblings Story (see Appendix C).
- Participants had small group discussions on sexual violence prevention.
- Prevention strategies were based on the Spectrum of Prevention (see Appendix A).

What OutFront MN heard

- Prevention education on sexual violence was either nonexistent or not inclusive.
- LGBTQ relationships possess unique dynamics, and therefore preventing violence in these communities requires approaches specific to these populations.
- Isolation is a unique risk factor for sexual violence in the LGBTQ community.
- Social norms are a risk factor (e.g., that’s none of my business, discomfort with LGBTQ relationships, marginalization of communities, etc.).

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Women of Nations

Women of Nations is a Native American-focused organization, including a domestic violence shelter. Native American culturally-specific services are in high need among domestic violence and sexual assault victims and survivors. National studies show that domestic violence and sexual assault affects Native American women and children at a higher rate of two and a half more times than other races. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 1.3% of the population in the state of Minnesota is Native American (as of May 2017), yet more than 20% of the clients at the Eagle’s Nest Domestic Violence Shelter are Native American. Because of this grave disparity, Women of Nations continues to offer culturally-specific services for Native American clients.

Recommendations based on community listening sessions

Prevention plan for Women of Nations:
- Use a prevention curriculum for youth and parents at the Eagle’s Nest shelter.
- Learn how other organizations are incorporating prevention into their work.

Recommendations for sexual violence prevention professionals:
- Work with the child protection system, and other systems meant to support families, to better support parents dealing with violence.

Recommendations for policymakers:
- Require free prevention training for parents, teachers, school liaisons, and children.
- Include sexual violence prevention in medical appointments and community classes.
- Develop model sexual violence policies for schools.

Recommendations for funders:
- Fund youth centers in the Twin Cities, suburban, and rural areas.
- Fund curriculum development for organizations.
- Provide funds to a prevention hotline for caregivers and/or youth who need help.
- Provide funds for a mobile unit for reservations to provide confidential counseling for youth and families who want to learn more about preventing and responding to violence.

Recommendations for data collectors, evaluators, researchers, or epidemiologists:
- Conduct research on negative impacts of sexual violence on the Native community.
- Evaluate prevention education and provide results to the community.
Community Listening Sessions

The focus groups

- Community stakeholders in Duluth, co-hosted by a Native anti-violence coalition
- Community stakeholders in Minneapolis and St. Paul, co-hosted by the Urban Office of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
- Clients of Eagle’s Nest Shelter

What Women of Nations did

- Discussion questions focused on patterns of trafficking of Native women and girls.
- Women of Nations facilitators led discussions on what is working in communities to prevent violence and what communities still need in order to prevent violence.

What Women of Nations heard

- The Native community should not wait for or rely solely on policy changes for prevention to happen. We have to do prevention work together in our community.
- We have to teach prevention in Native American households first, then communities, and then anyone who works with Native youth.
- Kids need a safe place to go to in communities if no one in their family believes them.
- Native youth are isolated and lack hope. This can lead to grooming for trafficking and abuse. We must give hope and support to youth on reservations in particular.
- Parents who suspect sexual abuse want advice on how to handle situations and want anonymous places to go to. Sometimes parents want to do something, but are afraid of child protective services, mandated reporting, a past legal record, and potential discrimination.
- It will help if Native American families know they can trust the system. Changes to the system must happen on every level, including school systems, other childcare providers, Indian Child Welfare Act workers, tribal law, research and data collection, etc.
- Bystander approaches in our communities need to change and we need to be able to speak up against our cultural leaders, if needed.
- We need a prevention center where there is a legal team, mental health workers, and resources for families and youth.
- We need to return to indigenous ways, with adjustments.
- Some elders teach indigenous ways with “tough love,” which is hard on trauma. We should encourage elders to engage and develop relationships with youth and teach tradition with “love and acceptance” to decrease the feeling of alienation, isolation, and disconnectedness in youth.
Minnesota Department of Health – Sexual Violence Prevention Program

Who we are
The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Sexual Violence Prevention Program, funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Rape Prevention and Education Program, brings a public health lens to working with individuals and organizations to strengthen capacity to prevent sexual violence in Minnesota.

The role of public health
In order to prevent sexual violence, it is critical to ensure all voices are heard, most importantly, voices from marginalized communities who are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. To marginalize means to put or keep (an individual or a group of people) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group.\textsuperscript{10} This includes but is not limited to people with disabilities, people of color, Native Americans, LGBTQ individuals, children, women, and people of lower income. Marginalized communities have historically been left out of the dialogue where funding and policy decisions are being made. Public health’s role as a convener can help make these critical connections and make this work transformative by centering leadership from within marginalized communities.

The MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program has made it a priority to support and elevate these voices and leaders to the forefront of the discourse surrounding sexual violence. Through community listening sessions and engagement, we are embarking on a journey to listen, learn and share knowledge from community experts. We need to learn what works best for each community, given that each community has its own strengths, shared experiences, history, current contextual factors, traditions, customs, beliefs, etc. Additionally, different communities are at different places in terms of sexual violence awareness and prevention. Communities must lead in the pathway to prevention, based on their knowledge of their own community and of community readiness, in partnership with public health.

Communities First project description
The purpose of this project is to work with organizations who are motivated to strengthen their capacity to prevent sexual violence through a collaborative project. This project focuses on supporting organizations to engage their stakeholders in sharing and exploring their expertise about what it would take to end sexual violence in their communities.

\textsuperscript{10} In Merriam-Webster Online, Retrieved September 6, 2018, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/
What we learned about the process

- Provide a structured process that also allows ample room for creativity, freedom, and exploration, instead of being prescriptive. This includes being open to the use of different prevention models and frameworks outside of the mainstream.
- Extend the contract timeframe beyond three months to allow organizations to:
  - organize listening sessions throughout the state and outside of an organization’s immediate network;
  - prepare for translation and interpretation considerations;
  - disseminate findings to listening session participants; and
  - take more time to prepare final reports.
- Focus on relationship and trust-building with organizations.
- Offer a culminating roundtable conversation with all organizations present.
- Spend more time on goal-setting with each organization, for both the project and for future prevention work within the organizations.
- Ensure organizations have adequate time to show listening session participants the preliminary findings, in order to get their feedback if desired.
- Build in a follow-up action plan to continue and strengthen relationships to ensure ongoing collaboration.

MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program key recommendations

- Listen to community-specific organizations and support their leadership in prevention. Communities are experts on what does and does not work in their communities.
- Value, support, and fund culturally-specific prevention efforts.
- Ensure funding structures do not restrict and disallow prevention work.
- Support the disaggregation of demographic data in order to show disparities as well as ethnic and cultural differences.
- Equally value qualitative data and storytelling/narrative as much as quantitative data.
- Break down silos; sexual violence will not end unless people work across systems.
- Make sexual violence prevention a community-wide effort, across all age groups and identities; community members need to work together to build community responsibility and accountability for ending sexual violence.
- Grantees need flexibility and the opportunity for innovation and creativity, and funders and policy makers need to be less prescriptive and more in tune to the needs and wisdom of communities.
- Identify (and/or develop with communities) prevention models that resonate with each community.
Recommendations and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this partnership was to strengthen organizations’ prevention capacity, including Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Sexual Violence Prevention Programs prevention capacity. The relationships formed and the honest sharing among all of the participants was invaluable. MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program staff are grateful and honored to have been a part of the critical conversations that emerged during this project.

Our major takeaway from this project is to continue to reach out, make ample time to listen and respect community perspectives, and to build a true health equity approach into our work.

The MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program gained vital learning from this project and from each of the participants. Working WITH communities is essential if we are to prevent sexual violence. To quote the late Paul Wellstone, a U.S. Senator from Minnesota, “We all do better when we all do better.”

The MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program concludes this report with some questions for all people engaged in preventing sexual violence. If our goal remains to prevent sexual violence in all communities, we must recognize the ways our work affects those communities most marginalized and impacted by violence.

To practitioners:

How are you incorporating a health equity/anti-oppression lens in your work? What can you do to engage with organizations serving those most affected by sexual violence? Who is attending your meetings and what meetings are you attending? How can you ensure that there is reciprocity in your organization’s relationships with marginalized communities? How are you learning about, making space for, and raising up community-specific models and frameworks for prevention?

To funders:

Do you regularly review your grant requirements? How could your grant requirements be less restrictive or allow for greater creativity and flexibility? How do your grant requirements restrict or include prevention? What changes can be made to your grant requirements so that those with limited resources are encouraged to and able to apply? What preparations are you making to ensure everyone can be competitive with their applications? What are you doing to equip and strengthen capacity so marginalized communities can submit competitive applications?

To policy makers:

Who is at the table? How can we ensure that everyone present is heard and respected? How do you minimize the negative effects of policies that you create or vote for? What can you do to ensure that policies with unintended negative consequences are reviewed and revised?
Appendix A

The Spectrum of Prevention

The Spectrum of Prevention, developed by the Prevention Institute, is a tool to guide prevention work through different types of activities. Prevention must occur at many levels to prevent harms, and the Spectrum of Prevention guides individuals in selecting strategies. All levels are important and when used together have a larger impact than any single activity.

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Appendix B

The Social Ecological Model

The Social Ecological Model is one way to frame prevention across many levels, from individuals to wider society norms and legislation. The diagram below shows strategy to prevent sexual violence at each level of the model.

Appendix C

The Three Siblings Story

A prevention parable tells the story of three siblings who were taking a walk along a river. As they turned a corner, they saw people drowning in the river. One sibling rushed into the water and started bringing people to shore. The second sibling jumped into the river and coached the individuals on how to keep afloat. The third sibling ran upstream to see why so many people were falling into the river in the first place.

If we connect this story to sexual violence, the first sibling is the emergency response, like crisis lines, and the second sibling is intervention and treatment for victim/survivors. The third sibling is identifying the causes and conditions that lead to sexual violence in the first place to prevent harm.

While preventing sexual violence has typically focused on supporting individuals in crisis and through healing, preventing sexual violence before any harm occurs is equally important. All three siblings must work together to prevent sexual violence.
Appendix D

Adapted Social Ecological Model

Casa de Esperanza has adapted the ecological model to fit into the realities of the Latin@ community, known as the Adapted Social Ecological Model. The ecological model may not fit every community, and Casa de Esperanza used the knowledge from their work in communities to develop a new model that shows the importance of collective approaches to social change.

Appendix E

Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence

The Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence from the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence shows the many ways that girls and women face oppression from infancy through adulthood. This constant presence of violence and abuse creates a climate of fear for women and girls.