

Improving Our Responses to Preventing Sexual Abuse Using Nontraditional Teamwork

Lindsay Palmer, B.A.

In 1997, Washington State child abuse victim advocates acknowledged the importance of community specificity and community inclusion in the goal to eliminate sexual violence. The Sexual Assault Prevention Plan of Washington State included the goal: to impact the causes of child abuse through the shifting of ownership of solution from social services to the community, using stakeholder involvement. Workshop participants will learn how to involve and engage stakeholders using an untraditional practice in the prevention of child abuse and neglect across systems.

Theoretically, in public/private partnerships, as well as inter and intra-agency collaborations is the inherent assumption that a community of committed people, familiar with their community, and willing to enter into a process to seek a solution to preventing and responding to child abuse, will create the optimum intervention. In Stakeholder involvement with non-traditional partners and collaborations that integrate research, practice and policy, professionals are encouraged to share their unique expertise as participants within this community process. Ultimately a group of committed stakeholders will have a vested interest in the success of the strategies and practices for multi-disciplinary and cross system alliances that protect families and children.

Multi-disciplinary and cross system stakeholders should not be chosen based on their ability to conform to a specific analysis of child abuse, but rather their ability to enter into a thoughtful and respectful dialogue which recognizes and addresses the complexity of the issue. In order to build success for prevention efforts to work, all stakeholders engage in a process to emphasize the underlying conditions contributing to child abuse and neglect, as opposed to intervening on the observable problem. Directing prevention strategies and practices toward the underlying conditions will create greater change than addressing the reoccurring symptoms of the observable problem.

Lindsay Palmer has worked with nontraditional partners in child abuse prevention work and will discuss the importance of stakeholder involvement within the faith community. Through the illustration of their efforts in creating sexual violence prevention in faith communities, she will increase participants' understanding of stakeholder involvement in issue ownership and provide a practical example of

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how to address underlying conditions between nontraditional partners. Instead of a solely lecture format the workshop participants will have an opportunity to experience a 30 minutes exercise that facilitates stakeholder involvement and agreement. Lindsay will lecture, facilitate an experiential activity and provide time for questions and answers during the 1.5-hour workshop session.

At conclusion of the workshop, participants will understand how in partnership with others, we enter into a collaborative process to understand the dynamics of child abuse and neglect; in addition through dialogue and discourse we can reach a shared understanding. The resulting strategies derived from the stakeholder community are generally not what any individual stakeholder envisioned but is often exactly what the community needs to own the solution to the prevention of child abuse and neglect.