



Exploring Prevention Audio Library:
Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

Exploring Collaboration Challenges

Total time: 29min 09sec

Carli Rohner 00:00

Hi everyone, and thank you for listening to this short recording. This series is part of a larger audio series to help explore prevention, developing, and expanding our prevention efforts and troubleshooting challenges and in our prevention efforts. In this recording, we discuss common collaboration challenges that we might experience while facilitating prevention work and brainstorm some strategies to navigate these challenges. Today we're joined by Sexual Assault Task Force staff.

Meg Foster 00:22

Hi, I'm Megan Foster. I am the Prevention Program Coordinator.

Kate Hildebrandt 00:26

I'm Kate Hildebrandt. I'm the Campus Coordinator.

Carli Rohner 00:28

And I'm Carli Rohner, I'm the Campus Advocacy Coordinator here at SATF. The challenges we're going to discuss were identified by participants in the statewide comprehensive prevention training. So let's get started.

So the first section that we wanted to talk about today was how do you find the right support people and find more than one person in your community to get engaged and buy into the work that you're doing? So we had a lot of participants asked questions along this line and a lot of them were asking how do you get buy-in from your community and the members of that community?

Kate Hildebrandt 00:57

Yeah, so some of this depends on where you are in the process. If you're starting from a place of not having identified any allies, then it's looking at what organizations, what community members might be already doing things that are somewhat aligned with this work. It doesn't mean they have to be doing violence prevention necessarily, but who's doing other social justice efforts? What other organizations care about, for example, educating kids? What other organizations care about access and equity in our communities? So looking at that.

Sometimes you have already tried to reach out to those organizations, but maybe it hasn't worked out. And in those situations, sometimes you just broaden it and look at anyone. So one place that I started in the past is just thinking about who is interested in talking with me, or who has spoken out about anything related to these. Is there some root cause that we're both talking about, that I can draw on and build that relationship? Community building and finding allies definitely takes time, but also that sometimes some of my biggest allies have come from places that I didn't necessarily expect, like I

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Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

would expect that they would come from specific community organizations or from specific lobbying or interest groups. But sometimes it's from a completely out of left field or it's a parent activist, someone else. So just being open to listen to that can be really helpful. Another thing that can be helpful, sometimes not all of your allies are going to be allies in every single area, but can you draw on multiple allies for different types of allyship? So maybe that there's someone who's a really big advocate that we need community members to engage in schools more or that we need to bring the community together so you can ally with them for support around specific things, and maybe you find other allies for other specific tenants of your work.

Meg Foster 02:46

Additionally something you want to consider whenever we're talking about building good community partnerships is considering how you are a community partner as well. How you are showing up as an ally for other people's work and like making time in your schedule and your work priorities to be a meaningful ally to other people's work as well. And that is an important tenant to move this work and those community partnerships forward.

So additionally, folks had a kind of playing off of that same sort of question, some questions around connecting different service providers to work together toward a common goal. In particular, getting people on the same page, the same message, starting point, goal, etc. How do we do that? How do we connect those service providers that sometimes have overlapping missions or very different missions that are serving the same people? What does that look like?

Carli Rohner 03:40

Yeah, there's a lot of different ways that folks can approach this and you know, who you're working with best. So I'd say incorporate what you know about those organizations or practitioners in your working style. But one of the things that we found to be really successful is at the very beginning, just trying to sit down with those partners or the folks that you're going to be working with and making sure that those goals and that those objectives that you have are clear. One of the biggest things that I see in the technical assistance calls that we get from folks is that everyone might start a project or start working on their prevention efforts, thinking that they are all addressing the same thing or starting on the same page, get partway into the work, and then realize that they all have really different thoughts about how that work should be done. And so being able to communicate what that work looks like up front, what strengths are all the practitioners bringing to the table, what are the different expectations that those partners might have. For example, one might be like if you're doing training or programming, you might have a really different idea about what success looks like, based on number of participants, where another one might have an idea that success looks like skills learned by your surveys, or however that's looking. So being able to identify what success looks like, what are the strengths that you all are bringing to the table, what are some of the challenges that you can first see up front, and what are your expectations can be really helpful in making sure to connect folks and for your long term prevention efforts to be successful.



Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

Kate Hildebrandt 04:25

Another thing, just building off what Carli was talking about, is sometimes we get together we have these capacity building, these goal setting conversations, but sometimes we jump a little bit further ahead of where we need to start. A common question that we get sometimes is, you know, well, we have different definitions of trauma informed, for example. My supervisor, my community partner thinks they're being trauma informed, and I don't think that's what they're doing. So also starting there with what are values and what are the words we're using to define those values mean, can be really important. What does prevention mean to you? What does trauma informed mean? What does it mean to empower youth, things like that. And so sometimes, even if you're starting with capacity building, but take even a step back from where you think you may need to start.

Carli Rohner 05:59

Yeah. Totally agree.

Kate Hildebrandt 06:02

All right, so the next question that we got was around the concept of ownership over prevention and specifically challenges around partners who are trying to work with feeling ownership over prevention or challenging who can or should facilitate prevention, and especially when that leads to conflicting messages to audiences or to community members.

Meg Foster 06:25

Prevention takes a lot of work and we put a lot of our time, energy, thoughtfulness, and values into the prevention work that we do. And with that in mind, it's really important to acknowledge the work and the capacity that goes into prevention and recognize all the work that lots of different partners contribute to that. That being said, one of the things that has always kind of baffled me is one of our goals within prevention is getting people to adopt prevention values and norms and behaviors in our community. And when we have ownership over that prevention work, we're actually working against ourselves in this goal of kind of universal adoption of prevention principles and values. And so it's an interesting piece. And it also makes a lot of sense at times because people have put so much work into what they're doing. That being said, everything that Kate and Carli said in the last few questions about like working with people, and having that common language of strategic planning conversations, those collaboration conversations, is a really important piece. That will take time. A lot of times, that intentional relationship building and overlap sometimes will take time. And in the meantime, unfortunately, that often will look like people saying conflicting messages or partners working with multiple organizations who say they're doing the same thing, but are doing very different things. So having those conversations in constructive ways as early as possible, is really important.

Also, thinking about the different gatekeepers we have and how we can maybe make introductions to gatekeepers for those partners to work together more collaboratively, as opposed to a lot of conversations about why you should not work with certain organizations. What does it look like to actually bring people in rather than exclude people? I also think that ensuring that there are lots of

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Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

different voices informing the work that we do is really critical to that piece of addressing the root causes of violence, ensuring that it's not just us deciding or someone else deciding, and so creating space/creating opportunity for our community members and diverse representation of our community members to participate in these conversations. And sometimes that's not something that someone has done and so taking the time to, again, invite people in and have those conversations can be really valuable.

Carli Rohner 08:58

One of the great connection points that we can use when we're talking to our partners and trying to identify how folks feel about their ownership -- do folks feel really strongly that they own a particular program or area -- is to address the issue of burnout amongst our colleagues' prevention work. Like Meg said, [it] involves a lot of time and heart and energy and the more that we can collaborate and the less that we can be kind of territorial over our prevention effort actually extends the capacity of the practitioners in the field to be able to keep doing that work. It doesn't benefit our community for folks to hold on to certain parts of programming or certain parts of prevention and what that ends up doing in the long run is allowing for folks to end up with a lot of work on their plate and not allow community ownership of these.

Meg Foster 09:50

I also think we often focus a lot on promoting knowledge within prevention when really what we often want to be doing is promoting skills. When there are conflicting messages, it gives us a very unique and perfect opportunity to promote critical thinking, thoughtful analysis and like application of skills that are going to help all of us prevent more violence. So, another creative way of thinking about that.

Carli Rohner 10:19

So the next area that we had questions about was when you go to fix a problem, either within your prevention work, or to be able to think about what are the bigger issues within your community, what happens when there's a lack of agreement amongst your community partners or folks doing prevention works about either what the problem is or how you fix that in your community?

Kate Hildebrandt 10:40

This again, just highlights everything we've been talking about, about why community building and capacity building is so important and building those relationships beforehand. Because sometimes we do jump three steps ahead. And there are a lot of reasons, a lot of pressures, as to why we tend to do that, but if we jump in to just, "Okay, I have this curriculum, I want to implement it, how do I solve this problem?" we skip the step of bringing people on board. And like Meg was just talking about, disseminating the skills of actually doing prevention in multiple ways. So taking the time to do that ahead of time, but that's often where you then run into these problems about lack of agreement about the problem.



Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

So one thing you can do with lack of agreement is sometimes draw connections. It depends on what your type of disagreement is, but if, for example, you've got other community partners who are really worried about other core problems in the community, for example in Oregon, we're really having a housing crisis right now. So there's a lot of folks who are very focused on that and for good reason. Helping, if you're able to help folks draw the connections between root causes and how they relate, then you can be more supportive of each other in addressing those two different problems but how they have similar causes and how they can work together, how you can support each other. That's one issue. Sometimes though, it's not necessarily that you're addressing different issues. It's lack of agreement about within the root causes of violence, what causes the problem or how to fix it.

So again, it's about building those relationships and meeting the person where they're at in terms of what they're thinking now, what you think now, being humble and bringing yourself forward, but also kind of knowing your community partners. So, different people respond to different ways of receiving information or learning about things. For example, when Carli and I work with campuses, we find that upper administrators, faculty folks, tend to often respond to research. So it's great for us in our communities to have a lot of research and to have some good studies and some critical ways of looking at it, that we can engage with folks around that. We've had some good responses from that. That's not always effective in a lot of other areas. So thinking about what are other ways that have value with your community members and how you can share information with them. A lot of it is also that again, tone and relationship building at the offset, that just coming in and saying, you know, "No, I'm right, here's what we need to do," is not usually going to work. So thinking about instead sharing your expertise, listening, validating, using all those awesome skills that so many of us have to talk about that together.

Another thing is, sometimes multiple approaches are not necessarily going to be harmful, right? If there's disagreement about what the most important way to address the problem is, but both of those things are going to bring you closer towards a holistic solving of a problem, then you can implement both of those. There are other times of course, we know that somebody might have ways of addressing the problem that we find problematic and challenging. I'm thinking especially when it comes to things like victim blaming, or we just need to teach people to protect themselves from being raped by changing the way they dress, changing how much they drink, things like that. Then it takes more capacity building and time, but again, those relationships, it really comes down to that ability to form those trusting partnerships so that you can work together and build towards different understandings.

Meg Foster 14:13

Building off that a little bit, I think that we got a lot of questions, and this is a pretty consistent question that we received, around connecting with people reaching underserved populations and particularly considering not doing this in a tokenizing way or a problematic way. But what does it look like to do to really connect with people reaching underserved populations?

Carli Rohner 14:34

Yeah, and this is a great question, I'm really happy when it comes up because we're able to have really interesting conversations. And it's especially important if you are somebody who comes from a

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Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

dominant culture, particularly white, straight culture, that's fine. And you have to be particularly thoughtful about how you're showing up and approaching work. One of the biggest areas where we see folks show up and kind of, like Meg said, have more of a tokenizing effect on folks is just going to identity-based resources, community programs that support underserved populations, and expecting that you will automatically be able to, one, access those organizations and utilize the resources and the community connections that they have. So one of the things that we recommend for folks is show up in a genuine way, show up and try and learn about their programs before you make asks about how they can connect you to the community, or utilize some of the resources that they have.

And in part of that I think it goes back to one of the earlier questions we were talking about, about how can you show up for them and their work. This work is really important to keep framed as intersectional as possible. So how are we addressing maybe different areas of violence or oppression, but we can help each other out. So when you show up to those programs, be thinking about how am I showing up to your organization or your events that you're having in the community? Am I making time in my schedule? Do I support you when you call or email or ask? What are you able to offer back to the organizations in terms of support, and being willing to do so without credit? There's certain times where we bring in some of that territorial piece around prevention and so being able to say, "I'm willing to help in a genuine way to increase the capacity of both of our organizations," can be really important. And then being there to listen and actually learn from those organizations without the expectation that they have to do a lot of extra work for you on your behalf.

Kate Hildebrandt 16:40

Another thing that we can do as folks with dominant identities in this work is sometimes what I've heard from community partners before is that one of the ways that I can use my privilege is to help instruct others with privilege and help them change and not continue to perpetuate harm. So also looking at what is our role in addressing harm perpetuation and oppression. And how can we leverage that so that maybe it's not appropriate or that organization, that community doesn't want us there as a white cisgender, upper class person, whatever that looks like for you, but maybe you can use that to then help others to start address some of the oppression that that group is experiencing.

Carli Rohner 17:25

Yeah. And just being really thoughtful and listening. If a group that you're going to that comes from an underserved community or population says this is what is happening in our community, this is what we need, honor that and take that as it is and incorporate that in your work. One of the ways that we also see these collaborations sour or have a hard time taking off is when folks with dominant identities come in and say, "What is going on for you what is what does your community need?" We take that information in and then we don't do anything meaningful or we don't communicate about how we're trying to help address those issues that the community has brought up. And so just being thoughtful about if folks are willing to share information with you, take that to heart, and then figure out how you can best support them in using that information.



Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

Kate Hildebrandt 18:14

Awesome. So another question we got on this theme is just when people don't want to collaborate with us, what do you do about that?

Meg Foster 18:21

Yeah, my first question around that is always kind of "Why?" And just what is the history that exists there? Because history matters. And a lot of times, relationships are tied to, or those community partners and everything, are tied to institutional and historical trauma of trying to work together in the past or being erased by certain organizations. And a lot of times when we come into a new organization, we start trying to build those relationships, and we sense that resistance, and it's not necessarily about us individually, but we have to do some of that work, especially if we are part of those dominant identity groups to unpack the historical trauma and problems that have occurred between these these different organizations. So history matters.

Why are people not wanting to collaborate? Additionally, sometimes people might not understand how the dots are connected. Maybe you do, and you can help folks connect the dots and sometimes that might again, take more time than you anticipate. Maybe it's not as simple as going in and saying, like, "Look, this affects this. And this affects this and we're done." Right? But by meaningfully showing up by giving that time and dedicating that time to help folks connect the dots, you're not only like furthering your goals of prevention, like you're building those longer term relationships that can really matter. And so seconding, or thirding, or fourthing, all the things that Carli and Kate said about like meaningful partnership and meaningfully showing up for and with people. But also, in particular, what we have some power and control over professionally is the pieces on our end that reinforce barriers to collaborating. And so by dedicating the time and the capacity and making space in our work to do that, when it's possible, is going to get us a lot further.

Carli Rohner 20:23

Also, one small piece that we often don't consider is that sometimes folks just don't have the bandwidth to be able to engage with us and seeing prevention work as another job on top of their many jobs or on top of the many things they're doing. And so if we can help identify meaningful ways for them, that doesn't add workload, but help increase our prevention efforts, I think that's also really meaningful to spell out and connect the dots for folks with.

Meg Foster 20:54

That is a perfect segue to this next piece of just not having enough resources to do community collaboration.

Carli Rohner 21:02

Yeah, this is so common, a perennially difficult issue for folks who are doing prevention work. This is the whole section of audio that we're talking about just keeps relating back to building strong partnerships because when we have those, when we've had some of those conversations that we talked about

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Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

earlier in this audio piece, one of the things that we can do is identify what resources each other have, and then be able to leverage those in creative and unique ways. So one of the things that when I have had what is a common issue for prevention folks, like when I've had a very tiny financial budget to be able to implement some of the things I want to do, but I know I have, particularly in campus work, another campus partner that has a healthy budget or they have access to donors or they have access to material goods that can be really helpful like printing costs and things like that, that might help my program. We collaborate in those ways to fulfill the needs of prevention. They get to help out prevention efforts without really any additional time, or added projects on their plate. And I'm able to get the work that I need to do to better serve our community. So having those conversations with your partners up front of around, what can you bring to the table? What are you all working with that can help each other and then you being willing to also help with resources that you're able to provide back to those partners can be really, really helpful. We have some tools available on our website that allow folks to go through and assess how you show up in that work, both in regards to resources, but also in regards to knowledge and training that you might be able to provide to each other. And so you can look for those, those are some of our assessment guides available on our website.

Meg Foster 22:50

I also think a common piece of prevention, like a difficult conversation that we need to have with ourselves regularly is about quantity over quality and what our goal is. And a lot of times, it's so easy for us to fall into this like, well, we have to do these 9 million things, because then we can show that we're doing these 9 million things and blah, blah, blah. And sometimes actually pulling back and doing the one thing and doing it really, really well gets us so much closer to our goals of whatever they are, but broadly preventing violence and abuse, like when we think critically about like, what does it mean to have the biggest impact, the longest lasting impact, and get us closer to our goal, that piece of quantity over quality is a difficult conversation we have to consider regularly. But that's an important piece of how we're managing our resources as well.

Carli Rohner 23:49

Yeah, that's fantastic and to build off of that, another challenge that comes up for folks around this resource piece and then scaling back in order to do really effective work is being a to educate our partners or supervisors or other folks we work with about scaling back is actually more meaningful, and actually maybe a better use of our both financial/personnel resources, whatever it might be. And so I really encourage folks to think about what are some of the ways that you can help educate your partners, whether it's other colleagues or folks on your team or supervisors or community members, about the importance of doing maybe one project really, really well and the impact that that can have versus spreading yourselves out over multiple initiatives and not being able to either fully complete them or complete them in a quality way.

Meg Foster 24:37

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Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

I also think that it is never, and it should not ever be, one organization or one person's job to do all the things to prevent all the violence and abuse. And this goes back to some of those pieces around like owning prevention or like prevention belonging to one person or one place. If our goal is really this broader like universal adoption of prevention, it's important that other folks are getting involved in prevention in whatever that looks like for them. And so working with people, as opposed to in isolation, helps address some of that resources piece, but also helps get us closer to comprehensive prevention efforts.

Carli Rohner 25:22

So one of the most recent questions that came up for us was about what happens when you have all of these things going, but then you have non-trauma informed either supervisors or co-workers or other folks that you are collaborating with. How do you handle that when it comes up for your prevention efforts?

Kate Hildebrandt 25:44

This can be a big challenge. And there are a lot of different ways to approach this. This can, for a lot of us, derail our work in a variety of ways in that it can be challenging to implement our work well and it can lead to burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, for ourselves for our co-workers. But there's a couple of different issues, right? Because it's one thing to say, Okay, I work at an organization that holds trauma informed values. But a couple of my coworkers are not enacting trauma informed values versus my organization is not trauma informed. My organization doesn't value that or my director and my supervisor, because the power dynamics there make that challenging in different ways. So one possibility is, there's always a way to look at, can you support that with education? Or do you have other allies in the organization or in the community that can help bring that to the organization's attention? So if it's coworkers, for example, or if it's pieces of the organization, but the organization as a whole holds trauma informed values, then there's a great opportunity for that.

But some of it also depends, you know, is the organization, or is the department, is the coworker, do they have a growth mindset? Are they open to learning? Are they open to changing things? When some of us get burned out, that growth mindset goes away, and we shut down. So trauma itself can sometimes be the root of not being trauma informed. Which is, again, another thing is important to have resources and support for coworkers, for our organizations. But so assessing some of that, is there a growth mindset present? Is there capacity for learning? Do we regularly engage in learning? Are there other values our organization holds that are aligned with trauma informed values that we can bring that along with? Can we invite an outside trainer? What kind of support do I have there?

Another element around that though, is protecting yourself and supporting yourself as much as you need when you're in an organization that the organization isn't trauma informed, supervisors, leadership isn't trauma informed and isn't enacting that, then there can be things you can do and sometimes we're limited by the systems of power in the structures we live in. So what steps do you need to take to protect yourself and to make sure that you're still able to do your work the way that you



Exploring Prevention Audio Library: Series 1, Episode 3 Transcript

want to? And that can look like self care or getting community care, community support. This is something that we've been thinking about a lot lately at the Task Force. And we've just released a couple of different tools for that, and are going to be releasing some webinars, different stuff like that. So definitely reach out. And that's something we want to support you in taking care of yourself and protecting yourself whatever ways you need, and in brainstorming other solutions as they're available.

Meg Foster 28:38

So thank you all so much for tuning in to this audio recording. And I'm sure there are great ideas and thoughts that we forgot to include, but please feel free to get in touch with us. Let us know what else to talk about, what else you want to share, and we would love to add those in future recordings. Thank you so much.

Kate Hildebrandt 29:00

Thank you.

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