

# Men as allies in sexual violence prevention

## Creating change through meaningful collaboration

*Sexual violence can be reduced and prevented when we begin to look at root causes of violence. Harmful social patterns and behaviors support sexually violent actions. These harmful patterns impact men and boys in different, but no less damaging, ways than women and girls. Men and boys have historically not been a large part of anti-sexual violence efforts. This fact sheet offers background on ways men and boys can be engaged in and begin essential conversations around sexual violence prevention and social change.*

### WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is **any type of unwanted sexual interaction**, ranging from personal attitudes and comments to sexual assault. Sexual violence is not a single act or situation—it is a series of nonverbal, verbal, and physical events that make people feel unsafe or afraid.

**Sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, geography, ability, appearance, sexual orientation, or gender identity.** Social patterns like using power over others, traditional gender roles, and silence contribute to ongoing abuse and sexual violence.

Although research has shown that most sexual assaults are committed by men, **not all men—or even most men—are perpetrators of violence.** Men and boys have a meaningful role to play in education, awareness-raising, and prevention.

### LEARN MORE. SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

The crucial first step in creating lasting change is to acknowledge that sexual violence is a community problem. This means seeing anti-sexual violence work as more than “a woman’s issue” and seeing a role for all genders to participate. We all share the responsibility of creating safer communities.



### Addressing the portrayal of men in the media

The ways men and boys are portrayed in movies, on television, and throughout the music industry has a wide-reaching influence. Media has the power to shape our attitudes and behaviors. When only large, angry, aggressive, stoic, or violent depictions of men are shown, **boys and young men receive limited models for interacting with each other and with girls and women.** Communities can create lasting change when we challenge these depictions and offer new models for masculinity.

Critical media literacy offers a strategy for engaging young men in discussions of gender roles and stereotypes. This strategy also gives them an opportunity to *create* media depictions that represent their perspectives and experiences.



### **Promoting alternatives to traditional masculinity**

Pat McGann of Men Can Stop Rape offered a different model for masculinity in a 2011 blog post. His suggested that young men and boys be able to...

- Recognize unhealthy aspects of masculinity (i.e. those features that are harmful to the self and/or others)
- Replace risky and violent masculine attitudes and behaviors with empathetic behaviors and attitudes that benefit men and others.
- Visibly support gender equity and other forms of equity.
- Positively challenge unhealthy masculine attitudes and behaviors in themselves and others (McGann, 2011).

### **RESOURCES**

#### **Men Can Stop Rape**

<http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>

#### **Men Stopping Violence**

<http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/>

### **FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

#### **Media Education Foundation**

*Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes* (film)

#### **Media Literacy Project**

<http://medialiteracyproject.org/>

#### **New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault**

[www.njcasa.org](http://www.njcasa.org)

*A full listing of rape crisis centers and contact information can be found on NJCASA's website. For immediate assistance call the 24-hour Statewide Hotline at 1-800-601-7200.*

#### **Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team**

*Where our boys at? Involving young men as allies to end violence against girls* (curriculum)

#### **Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs**

*Skill-building activities for male teens* (resource list)

### **REFERENCES**

McGann, P. (2011, May 18). *Starting to define healthy masculinity* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://mencanstoprape.blogspot.com/2011/05/starting-to-define-healthy-masculinity.html>