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Why Stepping Up

- Post-secondary students in the highest risk age group for intimate partner violence and have the fewest resources
  - Women aged 15 to 34 are most at risk of experiencing violence in intimate relationships and are most at risk of serious types of violence (Stats Canada, 2013)

- Impact of dating violence
  - Health, mental health, academics and work (Silverman, Raj, Mucci & Hathaway, 2001)

- Lack of evaluated projects for post-secondary students
  - Majority of projects in the US have focused on sexual violence prevention
  - Dating violence projects developed for high school students or younger (Tutty et al., 2005)
National College Health Assessment (NCHA)

- Health and wellness survey first administered at Mount Royal University (MRU) in 2006
- One question asked about experiencing conflict/abuse in relationships
  - Type of relationship not identified
  - Type of abuse not identified
- Invitation to add questions, combined with interest in dating violence ...
Asking About Dating Violence

- Dating violence questions added in 2008, 2010 & 2013 (Warthe & Tutty)
  - 2008 - Attitudes, incidence, prevalence, lifetime experiences
  - 2010 - Attribution of responsibility, open ended questions on coping, effectiveness of coping strategies
  - 2013 - Prevalence (ever rather than within the last 12 months) (Warthe, 2011)

- Canadian reference group added a question on stalking in romantic relationships in 2013
Using NCHA Results to Inform Practice

- Incidence and prevalence of dating violence and the experience of violence as children and teens are concerns for post-secondary students
  - Students require information on dating violence and resources

- Results suggest the need for education on:
  - Healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships
  - Consequences of abuse (correlation between dating violence and health/mental health issues)

- Differences in help seeking and coping strategies suggest students:
  - Need information on helping resources
  - Do not perceive resources as accessible and responsive
  - Are more likely to talk to friends than family or professionals
Dating Violence Prevention for Post-Secondary

- Stepping Up: Reducing Dating Violence and Its Impact on Post-Secondary Students
  - Warthe, Carter-Snell, Kostouros, & Tutty

- Based on *Making Waves/Value par vague*, A Partner’s for Youth Project, NB
  - Peer facilitated
  - Weekend retreat
  - Participants complete prevention projects after the weekend retreat
  - Strong evaluative component
Project Objectives

- Measure changes in students’ knowledge, attitudes, behaviours or behaviour intent, and resources
- Determine factors affecting satisfaction
- Identify aspects of the program requiring modification

Reduce the impacts of dating violence by creating awareness and early intervention
Peer Facilitator Recruitment

- Pilot & 2013
  - Students selected by research team and/or by direct referral from faculty or student services
- Facilitators predominantly from Social Work and Child and Youth Care Counsellor programs
- Challenge attracting male facilitators
Curriculum Development

- Process model
  - Peer facilitated project requires that students are involved in identifying what is important to address in curriculum
  - Increases adaptability of project
  - Peer facilitators require skills and knowledge to manage facilitation of small group discussion, participant disclosures with confidence
- Series of weekends include:
  - Defining dating violence and impacts
  - Identification of emphasis for each module
  - Develop activities for each module
  - Trial run
Community Partnerships

- Advisory Committee
  - Police
  - Health
  - Counselling
  - Sexual health

- Community Partners
  - Involved in facilitator development, consult on the development of curriculum, present for the weekend modules
  - Key role in raising awareness about resources in the community
Prevention Weekend & Community Projects

**Pre-Weekend**
- Pre-measures

**Friday**
- Welcome
- Many Faces of Abuse (play)
- Icebreaker activities

**Saturday**
- Peer facilitated workshops
- Healthy Relationships
- Gender & Media Stereotypes
- Boundaries & Communication
- Sexual Relationships
- He Said, She Said - Part I

**Sunday**
- He Said, She Said - Part II
- Planning for community prevention projects
- Program evaluation

**Post-Weekend**
- Presentation of community prevention projects
- Post-measures
- Peer facilitator focus groups
Participants Projects

Projects created included:
- 200 lanyards
- 500 stickers
- 50 t-shirts
- 100 brochures on abuse in LGBT relationships
- 200 Notepads
- 100 Pledge bracelets
Particpants Projects

LOVE shouldn't hurt

Connect: 403.237.5888
The Distress Centre: 403.266.4357
MRU Wellness Services: 403.440.8877
Pre, Post & 8 month KABBI, 2011

Overall combined knowledge pre-post (all items) paired t-test
Pre = 40.73       Post = 52.45       p = 0.00* (df 10, SD 7.6)
Overall knowledge pre-post (all items) paired t-test

Pre = 41.05  
Post = 56.67  
\( p=0.00^* \)  
\( (df=17 \ SD \ 7.45) \)
Participant Outcomes

- Created greater awareness of informal and formal supports available for those experiencing abusive relationships
- Explored different perspectives on our definitions of abuse
- Built relationships amongst peers, faculty and community partners
- Gained tools to address abuse in relationships
- Increased confidence

“If I had (been) informed about unhealthy and abusive relationships prior to meeting my ex-boyfriend maybe I would have thought twice before entering the relationship or maybe I would have at least ended things sooner.” Anonymous Participant
“Relationships ebb and flow and it's okay to change and grow within the relationship”

“It’s okay to question”

“Student/participants and facilitator led programming is an interesting way to see the real issue”

“Words are ambiguous. The situations and circumstances change the meaning behind them”
Impact on Participants

“I knew exactly what it felt like to be ashamed and in denial of your relationship.... And so in my compilation of facts, texts, and resources, I wrote about messages that would have made me feel better in that time”

Anonymous Participant

“Hearing other people’s stories, really helped me to feel more at peace with what happened to me. It showed me that what happened was not my fault. I was a victim. “

Anonymous Participant
Impact on Participants

Stepping Up:

- Gave me language and a voice
- Gave me confidence
- Increased my awareness
- I take risks now
- I have personal and professional growth
- Gave me a community for change
Impact on Peer Facilitators

- Not only does Stepping Up help with facilitating groups with the field that I am in now but it also has broadened my view on a subject that is often put under the covers and not brought up on a daily basis.

  Mike S, peer facilitator

- There is an opportunity that is unique in a university setting to really engage people in having those conversations and engage people in what healthy relationships are and look like and should feel like for them. By doing that within the university setting, when people move out and into the communities and their professions that they have a greater idea of what is important to them.

  Carrie M, peer facilitator
Impact in the Community

Mount Royal University aims to spur positive conversation amid condom slogan controversy

Carrie McManus, co-ordinator of the Stepping Up project, which aims to raise awareness about dating and sexual violence, said the culture created at post-secondary institutions is key to preventing abuse.
Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- Importance of:
  - Process model
  - Community partners
  - Peer facilitator development (facilitation & managing disclosures)
  - Sustainable funding
  - Project evaluation

- Next Steps:
  - Transition to Student’s Association
  - Violence Prevention position at the university
  - Continued efforts to address raising awareness/education, policy, screening in health and counselling, and training for staff and faculty
American College Health Association (2013). National College Health Assessment II: Canadian consortium reference group executive summary. Hanover, MD: American


