

Preventing Intimate Partner Violence in Rhode Island

Together, we can create safe, connected communities

















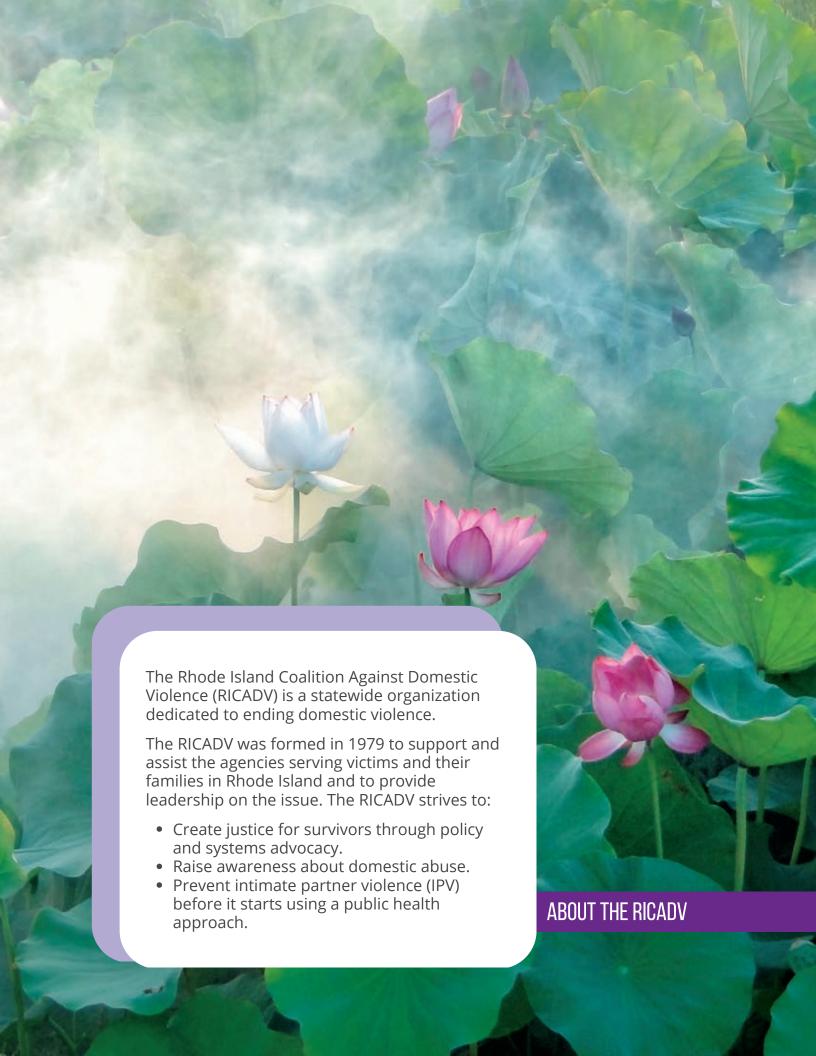


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INTRODUCTION

For 20 years, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) has been implementing and evaluating strategies funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV).

In **2011**, we released Rhode Island's first plan for domestic violence primary prevention, *Addressing the Violence Before It Starts*. The plan's goals were to:

- Use evidence-informed strategies to change harmful norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that support domestic violence.
- Engage men and teens.
- Support the community to use and evaluate primary prevention strategies.

Over the past decade, we have moved forward on these goals in collaboration with our member agencies, the RICADV's survivor task force SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships), the State Leadership Team for IPV Prevention, members of Ten Men, state and community-based organizations, and the community.

In **2018**, with continued CDC funding, we began a process to revise and enhance the State Action Plan.

In **2020**, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged us to slow down, adapt, and take care of ourselves and each other. As the pandemic magnified harmful racial and gender disparities, we continued to reimagine the paths forward leading to thriving communities for all people. Movements led by those most impacted by violence, such as Black Lives Matter, demanded safety, justice, and accountability, calling us to deepen our commitment to address the root causes of abuse: systemic oppression and inequity.

As our work continued, our vision of a safe and just Rhode Island came more clearly into focus.

To realize this vision, we must continue to:

- Strengthen the ways Rhode Island supports and protects victims of abuse and their children.
- Educate our communities about the warning signs of domestic violence and the resources available in our state.

We must also prioritize *primary prevention* to:

- Change the harmful conditions and norms that increase the risk for abuse, including poverty and strict gender roles.
- Create supported, connected communities that safeguard against violence.

In this publication, we outline three priorities for the state of Rhode Island to prevent domestic violence before it has a chance to start, so babies born tomorrow grow up to never witness, perpetrate, or experience abuse.

We hope you will see yourself reflected in these pages, among the many people and organizations striving to create a vibrant, equitable Rhode Island, where everyone is safe and each person can thrive.

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- DATING VIOLENCE
- INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

These terms will be used interchangeably to describe a pattern of abusive behaviors in an intimate relationship that one person uses to maintain power and control over their partner.

"We are beginning to understand that the world is always being made fresh and never finished; that activism can be the journey rather than the arrival; that struggle doesn't always have to be confrontational but can take the form of reaching out to find common ground."

— Grace Lee Boggs



PURPOSE

This publication is a resource that can help the state of Rhode Island prioritize the primary prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV).

Its expansive vision aligns with emerging public health science on how to prevent IPV before it happens in the first place, before people ever become victims or perpetrators of abuse.

This resource can help people, groups, organizations, and systems see how their goals, work, or interests connect to IPV prevention, perhaps in surprising or unexpected ways. It will guide the RICADV's prevention priorities into the future, and we will make additions and changes as needed to be responsive to the community.

We invite you to play a part in this collective work. It is up to each of us to bring this vision into the places where we live, learn, work, play, and pray. Together, we can end domestic violence.

Key audiences

- Community organizations, including advocacy, social services, public health, public policy, and youth-serving organizations
- Schools, educators, and school administrators
- State agencies
- Elected officials and policymakers
- The RICADV's network of member agencies and members of SOAR, Ten Men, and our Board of Directors
- Funders and grant-makers
- Survivors of IPV and related forms of violence
- Community members



To learn more about primary prevention, turn to the foundational frameworks on page 36.

NEARLY

1 in 3 women in Rhode Island

have experienced physical violence, contact sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹

While men can be victims of intimate partner violence (IPV), data show women are disproportionately affected by IPV.²

Studies show people who are LGBTQ+ experience IPV at the same or higher rates.³

THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Studies have shown that the advances in domestic violence-related laws and expansion of victim services in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States led to a decrease in domestic violence.⁴ Since that drop, however, the numbers have remained consistent,⁵ and Rhode Island continues to experience steady loss of life to domestic violence each year.⁶

Nearly 1 in 3 women (141,000) and 1 in 4 men (100,000) in Rhode Island have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) during their lifetime.⁷

The majority of female victims report at least one severe impact from the violence, compared to about one-third of male victims. Impacts include being fearful for one's safety, being injured, missing work or school, requiring medical care, needing help from an advocate, and experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁸ State data show men perpetrate the majority (84%) of domestic violence in Rhode Island.⁹

Nearly 1 in 7 Rhode Island teens have experienced physical or sexual dating violence, among public high school students who have dated someone within the past year. ¹⁰ In 2020, children were present in 26% (1,368) of the domestic violence incidents that resulted in arrests, which occurred in nearly every city and town in Rhode Island. ¹¹

Each year, our network of member agencies serves an average of 10,000 victims of domestic violence and their children. In 2021, advocates provided 42,170 individual services, answered 13,851 hotline calls, and assisted 2,755 victims in obtaining a restraining order.

Even still, countless needs of victims go unmet due to a lack of resources. According to the national *Domestic Violence Counts Report*, in 2021, the highest unmet need in Rhode Island was for housing and emergency shelter.¹²

These statistics only paint a partial picture of the problem. Existing data systems have many limitations and often do not collect IPV data consistently, frequently, or inclusively. Domestic violence is also largely underreported due to the numerous barriers victims face, including fear for their safety, the stigma surrounding abuse, and not being able to access systems and services for support.



Priorities and Focus Areas:

Preventing intimate partner violence in Rhode Island before it starts



"Not only is it critical to make space for what we have not yet been able to imagine, but at the same time to amplify that the practice is grounded, everyday, and already unfolding—now."

— Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth Richie





Address the root causes of intimate partner violence (IPV), which are systems of oppression and inequity, by centering the experiences of those most impacted by IPV.

We cannot end domestic abuse until we achieve racial and gender equity and end oppression in all its forms.

At the core of domestic violence is power and control over an intimate partner on a relationship level. This power and control dynamic is rooted in systems of oppression that create imbalances of power among groups of people on the community and societal levels. Systems of oppression include racism, sexism, transphobia, and unbridled capitalism.

While domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, some groups are at increased risk for violence, in part because the distribution of resources that keep people safe and promote well-being is not equitable.

Systems of oppression drive these inequities and create conditions such as poverty and a lack of educational and economic opportunities – factors that increase the risk for domestic violence.¹³ That is why achieving social and economic justice is central to our mission to end abuse.





This priority includes four focus areas. To prevent domestic violence and create a safe and just Rhode Island, we must:

1 Amplify the priorities of those disproportionately impacted by intimate partner violence (IPV) and its risk factors.

The groups most impacted by IPV are also those most impacted by other forms of violence and systemic oppression, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, 14 women, 15 people who are LGBTQ+, 16 people with disabilities, 17 immigrants, 18 and people who are or have been incarcerated. 19 People who experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination at the same time are more vulnerable to abuse. We must invest in BIPOC communities that have been historically excluded from opportunities and resources, follow the lead of those most impacted, and fund community-based organizations to develop and implement solutions.

2 Empower survivors of abuse to co-create and lead strategies to prevent IPV.

Survivors are the experts in their own lives and know best what will keep them safe and help them thrive. The survivor task force SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships) has been leading advocacy and awareness efforts to create social and systemic change in RI for over 30 years and continues to be a powerful force for prevention. Survivors of abuse across the state know what is needed for their homes and communities to be safe. We must listen.

"The futures of our children matter. Our collective liberation matters. We need to act, so we can finally live whole and free."

Damaris, a member of the survivor task force SOAR and the RICADV's Board of Directors, shared her story at a Ten Men symposium.



Improve quality of life and increase community connectedness in the places we live.

Research shows that rates of domestic violence decrease in communities with access to safe, affordable housing, jobs that pay a living wage, and open, green spaces, such as parks.²⁰ Strategies that are "place-based" focus on a whole set of issues a particular community faces, such as a lack of affordable housing and a lack of green space, and approaches them as interrelated, rather than as separate issues. Investing in places and neighborhoods where health disparities exist can help advance equity and prevent violence. Efforts to empower and mobilize local residents and organizations to identify needs and create solutions can increase feelings of connection within a community and increase *collective efficacy*, defined as the shared belief among a group of people that they can create positive change. Studies show community connectedness and neighborhood collective efficacy protect against intimate partner violence (IPV).²¹

4 Support community-led prevention efforts through the Rhode Island Deborah DeBare Domestic Violence Prevention Fund (DVPF).

The DVPF funds community-based projects that address root causes of violence and center communities most impacted by IPV (turn to page 28 to learn more). The DVPF also supports services for children who witness domestic violence. As a state, we must strengthen our investment in the DVPF to break the cycle of abuse and prevent IPV before it starts.

"I loved being able to talk about all these issues that affect our community and that schools don't touch upon. I feel this is a safe space, and the people couldn't have been more understanding and loving."

— Hidden Lotus participant



Hidden Lotus is a program by ARISE (Alliance of RI Southeast Asians for Education), supported by the DVPF, that adapts the evidence-based curriculum Girls Circle to create a gender inclusive, culturally responsive, trauma-informed space for young people of color. Participants build leadership and social-emotional skills and raise awareness among their peers about dating violence and healthy relationships.

"Love is an action, never just a feeling."

— bell hooks





Create safe, supportive environments and change harmful social norms.

As we continue to advocate for the safety and well-being of victims of abuse and their children, we must also shift the harmful norms, attitudes, and behaviors that allow this violence to happen, and strive to build communities that are vibrant, safe, healthy places for all people.

Our community environments, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, influence our attitudes and behaviors. When we work to improve safety, stability, connection, awareness of intimate partner violence (IPV), and collective intolerance for IPV within these environments, we can promote social norms that help reduce the likelihood abuse will happen.

Changing norms that contribute to IPV can include engaging men to challenge harmful gender norms that oppress women and LGBTQ+ people. We must also address the stereotypes and stigma surrounding domestic violence, including victim-blaming attitudes and the idea that domestic abuse is a private matter rather than a community problem that deserves a community response.





This priority includes five focus areas. To prevent domestic violence and create a safe and just Rhode Island, we must:

1 Strengthen economic supports for families, including income, housing, and child care.

Economic insecurity increases the risk that domestic abuse and other forms of violence will happen.²² By creating economic stability for all people, we can improve a wide range of health outcomes in our state and work towards decreasing rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). Economic supports include policies and strategies that help people meet basic needs, increase income, access paid leave, and participate in adult education and workforce training programs. Economic supports also include fair housing and affordable child care to ensure families have a safe, stable place to live and children receive quality care while their parents are at work. To achieve economic justice, we must close racial and gender wage gaps that are widest for women of color. For example, women in RI typically make \$.86 for every dollar paid to men. Black women in RI typically make \$.58 for every dollar paid to white men, and Latina women in RI typically make \$.51.²³ We must fund community organizations led by and serving those most impacted by IPV and amplify their priorities for strengthening economic supports for all people and families.

Promote the safety and well-being of Rhode Island children.

Research shows supportive, nurturing family relationships can promote positive outcomes for children exposed to domestic violence.²⁴ This is one reason we work to ensure children remain in the care of the non-offending parent when domestic violence is present. To stop IPV before it starts, we must also build up the protective factors that promote children's overall well-being. To help families experience less stress and spend more time together, we need workplaces that offer flexible and consistent schedules, paid leave, on-site child care, and other supports, such as lactation rooms. With women shouldering greater caregiving responsibilities than men,²⁵ these kinds of policies help advance gender equity. They are also linked to increased employee productivity and retention.²⁶ We must also prioritize state-level policies that can have a wide-reaching, sustained impact on children's well-being, such as policies to expand access to high quality affordable child care and establish universal pre-K in Rhode Island.

3 Engage men and boys as allies to prevent gender-based violence.

Intimate partner violence happens in all kinds of relationships, but the majority of intimate partner violence (IPV) is perpetrated by men against women.²⁷ While most men are not violent, many remain silent about other men's violence against women and people who are LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming. Definitions of manhood that encourage aggression, dominance, and strict gender roles along the binary of man-or-woman contribute to a culture of violence.²⁸ For the past decade, the RICADV has mobilized local men through the strategy Ten Men to change harmful gender norms and embody healthy masculinities that reject violence and promote equality and care. We must continue to call men in to help end IPV.

Here are everyday ways men can help build a world without violence:

- Support and make space for women and people of all genders to lead.
- Model healthy relationships based on equality and respect, including sharing household responsibilities, such as child care and chores.
- Advocate for workplace policies and practices that support survivors of abuse and create safe, healthy work environments.

4 Empower young people, and support their leadership and activism.

Young people under the age of 25 are at a high risk of experiencing IPV.²⁹ We need to provide spaces for young people to develop their leadership and social-emotional skills, where they can build self-worth, create strong social support networks, and learn how to communicate and resolve conflicts in healthy ways. Many young people in Rhode Island are engaged in local and national efforts to build safe, caring, and just communities. We must follow their lead when creating solutions to prevent abuse and address its root causes. One way we can do this is by funding and partnering with youth-led organizations and campaigns in RI, such as Counselors Not Cops, where young people are demanding funds be spent on mental health counselors in schools instead of police officers. We can also empower young people as peer educators and advocates who raise awareness among their peers about healthy relationships, IPV, and available resources. Young people have ideas, energy, creativity, wisdom, and courage. They are already leading the change in RI – adult allies can help make sure their voices are heard.

Improve school climate to increase safety, connection, and belonging in schools.

Feelings of belonging and connectedness at school are protective factors that decrease the risk young people will experience intimate partner violence (IPV) and related forms of violence.³⁰ Schools can strengthen these protective factors with strategies to improve school climate, such as nurturing student-teacher relationships, building strong connections with parents and families, and connecting students with resources that meet their needs, such as mental health supports or community-based afterschool programs. Research suggests another promising strategy for preventing IPV is social-emotional learning programs.³¹ These programs can promote respect, empathy, and healthy communication and conflict resolution skills, and create the conditions for caring, nonviolent relationships.

Unfortunately, all students do not experience school connectedness at the same rates. The groups who report lower levels of connectedness are also the groups who report experiencing violence at higher rates, including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth and youth with disabilities.³² Strategies to improve school climate and help prevent violence include forming student-led Gender and Sexuality Alliances and providing developmentally appropriate, inclusive sexual health education. School policies, such as RI's Lindsay Ann Burke Act, can protect young people from violence, harassment, and discrimination and promote supportive, trauma-informed environments that foster holistic health and wellness beyond physical activity and nutrition.



Rhode Island was the first state in the country to pass a comprehensive teen dating violence education law to prevent dating abuse. **It's called the Lindsay Ann Burke Act.**



Scan to read the RICADV's recommendations for strengthening the implementation of this RI law.



"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

— Audre Lorde





Work together to coordinate and sustain primary prevention on the state level to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) and related forms of violence before they start.

Many forms of violence – including IPV, sexual violence, youth violence, bullying, and suicide – are interconnected and impact each other. They share some of the same risk factors that increase the likelihood violence will occur, and some of the same factors that protect against violence.³³

There remains a lack of collective understanding about these shared risk and protective factors, and many of us approach prevention work from the silo of our particular issue, such as IPV, substance abuse, or youth mental health. We need to shift to a more integrated approach that focuses on empowering and strengthening our communities to prevent multiple related forms of violence and health risk behaviors before they start.

The knowledge and wisdom of our communities can help us move in this direction. As a state, we must center the experiences of those most impacted by violence and inequity, fund them to develop and lead the solutions, and take action on the policy priorities they define.



This priority includes four focus areas. To prevent domestic violence and create a safe and just Rhode Island, we must:

1 Enhance the coordination and collaboration of cross-sector partners on the state and community levels.

No one person or organization can end intimate partner violence (IPV), just as no single program or strategy can prevent it. Commitment, collaboration, and leadership from diverse partners with shared goals and values are key. Over many decades, the RICADV has established strategic broad-based partnerships across sectors, including but not limited to state agencies, public health, higher education, media, health care, non-profits, faith-based institutions, youth-serving and culturally-specific community-based organizations, and social justice advocacy and organizing groups. We must continue to align our strategic plans, build on each other's efforts without duplicating them, and collaborate across issues beyond narrowly defined funding categories. Working together, we can rely on one another's expertise to identify opportunities, fill gaps, maximize available funding, and move our collective vision forward.

2 Build community power to advance health and racial equity.

Within the field of public health, there is an increasing focus on health equity to achieve healthy outcomes for all people. Advancing health equity within our communities must happen in partnership with the community. For example, community organizing groups often seek to transform the systems and structures that drive inequities in the resources affecting our health and well-being, such as housing, education, health care, and food. They hold critical expertise and knowledge from leading this work across decades and generations. As we strive to end violence and ensure all people living in our state can thrive, traditional public health systems and institutions must listen to, learn from, collaborate with, and compensate the community to create solutions that are grounded in the strengths and priorities of the community.

3 Use data to guide intimate partner violence (IPV) primary prevention efforts and address the root causes of IPV.

Using data can help us assess the prevalence of IPV, as well as disparities in rates of IPV and the impact on victims to understand who is disproportionately affected. Using data, we can educate decision makers to spur policy and systems change, monitor progress toward our prevention goals, and identify shared risk and protective factors among related forms of violence.

To use data in these ways, we must be able to access quality data related to IPV and its risk and protective factors. We must maintain and increase the number of state- and community-level data sets available in RI, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered by the RI Department of Health. We must also advocate for these data sets to be inclusive, accessible, comprehensive, timely, and responsive to the community's needs.

The ways we approach and utilize data can be transformative in our efforts to address the root causes of IPV and build equitable, safe communities. For example, we should:

- Disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, and other sociodemographic characteristics whenever possible to identify those most impacted.
- Co-create data and evaluation approaches with the people participating in or affected by the program or strategy. Share back data for the community to use and make meaning from it.
- Embrace the importance of qualitative data, such as stories, alongside quantitative data, such as statistics.
- Allow for flexibility and openness when evaluating complex social change efforts that unfold over time, including slower processes that build trust with participants and produce knowledge and information that communities want and value.

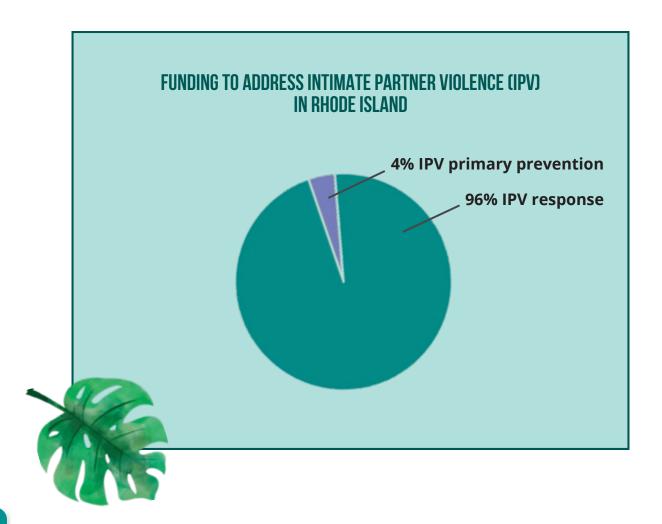
Increase funding for intimate partner violence (IPV) primary prevention.

We must continue to advocate for the safety of victims and hold people who abuse accountable, as we continue to provide services for survivors and raise awareness about the issue. These efforts are critical for responding to the violence that is already happening in our communities.

We must also address the root causes of IPV to prevent people from ever becoming victims or perpetrators. However, when we look at the funding that exists in Rhode Island to address IPV:

- Only 4% of funding is available to prevent IPV before it starts.
- 96% goes towards responding to IPV after it has happened.³⁴

We must increase resources for primary prevention to decrease rates of IPV in our communities and end domestic violence for future generations.



"Have a plan. Have a vision. Carry a sign. Get involved in whatever capacity. Do whatever you can. Everybody's needed.

You have a responsibility."

— Madonna Thunder Hawk





TRANSFORMING OURSELVES: ASPIRING ANTI-RACISM IN ACTION

For over two decades, the RICADV has been developing our organizational culture as an aspiring anti-racist, anti-oppressive organization.

As we work to change systems, policies, and environments to remove barriers for survivors, address the root causes of abuse, and create the conditions where all people can thrive, we must also work on ourselves and our own organizations as part of the change we seek to create.

This vision is grounded in the following commitments and practices:

Support the leadership of women, trans, and non-binary people of color.

Build trust and authentic relationships with colleagues and community members. Share power.

Practice cultural humility, a lifelong process of curiosity and self-reflection to understand one's biases, challenge power imbalances, and hold institutions accountable to serve all people.

Prioritize self-care and community care as part of the work, including making time to rest, play, and share in nature, art, and food together.

Recognize and unlearn the elements of white supremacy culture.³⁵ Actively practice living into the antidotes to this culture.

Taking Root:

Primary prevention strategies in Rhode Island



The Rhode Island Deborah DeBare Domestic Violence Prevention Fund (DVPF) supports community-based efforts to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) before it starts. The following projects are examples of initiatives that have been supported by the DVPF since its creation in 2016.



Progreso Latino

This project increases community connectedness and mobilizes adults and youth to create social change and policy change. Members of the Adult Social Action Committee build leadership skills to become involved in the issues impacting their community. Participants partner with local policy coalitions and are active in state-level policy campaigns, such as driver's licenses for all and health insurance for undocumented children.



Youth In Action

With funding from the DVPF, Youth In Action (YIA) created the "Ending Domestic Violence" youth-led Action Group, supporting young people as peer leaders to educate others on the problem of teen dating violence and ways to prevent it. Recently, YIA launched *Ten Young Men*, modeled after the RICADV's Ten Men strategy, to engage, educate, and mobilize male-identified youth to end IPV.



Partnership for Providence Parks

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this project supported the development of *ARTKits!* for young people in RI. These free take-home kits were filled with art supplies and distributed at free meal sites during the summer. Making these kits available helped with the effort to get youth to the meal sites and provided children with meaningful art-making activities while stay-athome orders were in effect. Supplies included bilingual drawing sheets created by Providence ¡City Arts! educators and coloring sheets promoting healthy relationships.

The RICADV's intimate partner violence (IPV) primary prevention work funded by our Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant has focused on the following strategies in recent years.



"All I ever wanted was a chance to make it on my own and live my life. We need to build up families and give them a fair and just wage. When our families can support themselves, the whole community is richer for it."

— Kathy, SOAR member





STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

The RICADV serves on many statewide policy coalitions and helps educate decision makers on the need for policies that increase economic security for all people. For example, we are a member of the Raising RI Coalition, which aims to strengthen RI Works, a financial and employment assistance program for parents and families with little to no income. We are also building partnerships with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) organizations and groups to understand their priorities for ending economic violence against BIPOC communities and increasing financial security. For example, we have funded and partnered with SISTA Fire RI, a member-led organization that is building collective power with and by women and non-binary people of color, as they develop strategies to build wealth and credit, such as lending circles.

TEN MEN: ENGAGING MEN AS ALLIES

Ten Men brings together annual cohorts of local men to educate themselves and others about the roles and responsibility of men to help end IPV and gender-based violence. Ten Men seeks to change the social and cultural norms that contribute to IPV and raise the visibility of local men engaged in IPV prevention through public awareness campaigns and community events.



Scan to watch the RICADV's playlist of digital stories featuring members of Ten Men.

INCREASING GREEN AND OPEN SPACE

Research has linked the presence of green space to reductions in rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) and other violent crime.³⁶ Led by the Newport Health Equity Zone (HEZ), this strategy aims to increase and improve parks and open space in places where residents want them and can access them easily. Efforts include activating local parks through public art-making, community conversations, farmers markets, and projects like the Big Blue Bike Barn (pictured right), as well as stewarding biking and hiking trails and planting trees. The HEZ empowers residents as leaders in local planning processes to share their priorities for the community and influence the plans and decisions affecting their neighborhoods.

The Women's Resource Center (WRC), a member agency of the RICADV, has been a funded partner on the RICADV's CDC public health grant since it began in 2003. WRC is the backbone agency of the Newport HEZ, a citywide collaborative mobilizing residents and resources of the Broadway and North End neighborhoods to make Newport, RI, a place where everyone can thrive.



Young people are pictured enjoying the Big Blue Bike Barn, created by Bike Newport, a lead partner of the Newport HEZ.



Staff from Aquidneck Land Trust, a lead partner of the Newport HEZ, attended an interactive creativity lab as part of a community needs assessment.

Civic engagement can be defined as participating in activities that improve the quality of life in your community by addressing issues of public concern. It can include voting, volunteering, getting involved in a community garden or food bank, attending your local town or city council meetings, or testifying at the State House.

To end IPV and related forms of violence, we need people in positions of power who reflect the diverse communities they serve and listen to the community's needs. This means we must protect and promote voting rights in all communities and amplify the leadership of people most impacted by violence and inequity, including supporting them to run for office or serve on local boards and commissions.

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"over and over again it becomes known the peace we seek is seeking us the joy a full bud awaiting our attention justice in our hands longing to be practiced"

— adrienne maree brown



PRIORITIZING PREVENTION: THE STATE ACTION PLAN

Developed in collaboration with the RICADV's State Leadership Team for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Prevention, the State Action Plan guides IPV primary prevention strategies at the state and local levels in Rhode Island. This publication describes many of these strategies. Some are funded by our CDC grant and led by the RICADV. Some are funded by other sources and/or led by other stakeholders. Tracking, supporting, and aligning with efforts led by other organizations is part of our State Action Plan to advance IPV primary prevention in Rhode Island.

Utilizing the State Action Plan, the RICADV and the State Leadership Team assess how we are moving forward as a state to prioritize IPV primary prevention. The State Action Plan is a requirement of our CDC funding. It lives internally at the RICADV and consists of a set of working documents and plans. Through its different components, we measure progress, share findings and lessons learned, monitor data indicators, promote data access and use, and coordinate resources and partnerships. Components of the State Action Plan include but are not limited to:

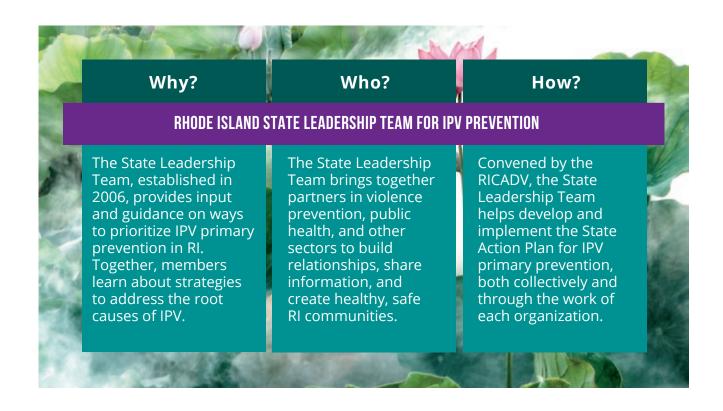
- Implementation plans, evaluation plans, and logic models for our CDC-funded prevention strategies and other prevention efforts.
- The Rhode Island Data Dashboard for Domestic Violence Prevention.
- A *Resource Inventory* that maps IPV funding, available data on IPV, prevention partners, and existing prevention strategies in Rhode Island.
- A Sustainability Plan for how the RICADV will sustain IPV primary prevention beyond any particular funding source or grant period. This plan not only considers how to put in place the needed financial resources but also how to weave IPV primary prevention into the fabric of our organization and integrate it into other state-level plans. To sustain prevention, we must also collectively invest in and retain the people who do the work. Supportive practices include developing our organizations to be actively anti-oppressive; ensuring equitable hiring policies, fair compensation, and trauma-informed supervision; and creating spaces to connect with each other and be inspired together.

GUIDING OUR WORK: RHODE ISLAND STATE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The RICADV developed this vision and the State Action Plan in partnership with the Rhode Island State Leadership Team for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Prevention.

The State Leadership Team helps develop, implement, and monitor the State Action Plan to prevent IPV before it starts. We work together to:

- Increase the coordination and reduce duplication of efforts among key partners.
- Engage new partners and stakeholders in prevention.
- Coordinate and increase resources for IPV primary prevention.
- Integrate IPV primary prevention into state-level planning.
- Increase the collection, access, and use of data related to IPV.





Foundational Frameworks:

A public health approach to preventing intimate partner violence

Individual-level prevention

- Social-emotional learning programs that teach how to identify and manage emotions
- Healthy relationships education

Relationship-level prevention

- Parenting programs that enhance parent-child communication
- Youth-led spaces where young people practice healthy relationships skills with supportive peers and adults

Individual Relationship Community Societal

Community-level prevention

- A community garden that helps neighbors get to know each other
- Youth-serving organizations that empower young people to lead

Societal-level prevention

- Media campaigns that promote gender equality
- Policies that strengthen household financial security

THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

The **Social-Ecological Model (SEM)** shows there are many personal and environmental factors that interact across multiple levels – the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels – and impact our health and behaviors.³⁷ Some of these factors increase the likelihood a person will choose to use violence or will become a victim of violence. Some of these factors decrease this risk and protect against abuse.

In our work to end intimate partner violence in RI, we seek to prioritize prevention strategies on the community and societal levels. When we focus on changing policies, systems, and environments, we can reach more people and sustain change over time. For example, strategies to improve school climate and feelings of safety and belonging at school can benefit the entire student body, as well as future students and the broader community.

- **Community-level prevention strategies** focus on changing environments within the settings where our relationships exist, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.
- **Societal-level prevention strategies** focus on the broad factors that increase or decrease the risk for violence, including social and cultural norms and health, economic, and educational policies.

THE MODEL IN PRACTICE

To prevent violence, we work on every level of the SEM. It is possible for a prevention strategy to only impact one level, but strategies usually span across several.

For example, the RICADV's Ten Men strategy aims to:

- Educate Ten Men members on the **individual level**.
- Create peer support and accountability on the **relationship level**.
- Mobilize Ten Men members on the **community level** to create change within their workplaces, schools, and faith communities.
- Shift attitudes on a **societal level** through statewide media campaigns.

TERTIARY PREVENTION

Prevent future violence and promote healing after violence has already occurred.

SECONDARY PREVENTION

Reduce the likelihood a person will experience violence or choose to use violence.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Change norms and conditions to prevent violence before it has a chance to start.



Focus on people who have survived violence and those who have perpetrated violence.

EXAMPLE:

Advocacy services that help victims stay safe and heal, such as shelter and support groups



Engage people who are at increased risk of using violence or becoming a victim of violence.

EXAMPLE:

School workshops that educate teens about the dynamics and warning signs of dating violence



Reach the broader community and benefit health and well-being of community members.

EXAMPLE:

Green and Complete Streets policies that promote safety, connection, and accessibility

THE PREVENTION CONTINUUM

A comprehensive approach to preventing domestic violence aims to strengthen the overall health and well-being of communities, connect individuals and families to resources, and respond to survivors' immediate needs.

The **prevention continuum** helps visualize this approach:³⁸

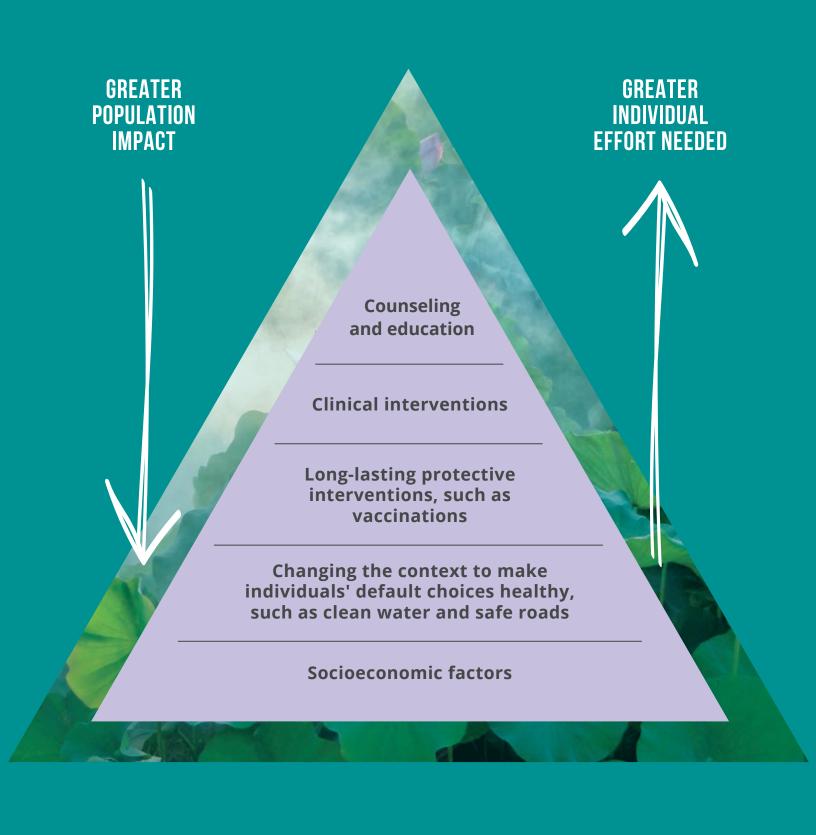
- **Primary prevention** aims to impact the broader community.
- **Secondary prevention** engages individuals or groups at risk of experiencing violence and includes immediately responding after violence has occurred.
- **Tertiary prevention** reaches individuals and families who have already experienced abuse, with the goal of healing and preventing long-term consequences of violence.

Primary prevention does not replace the other levels of prevention, but complements them. The community conditions and resources that keep victims and survivors safe are the same conditions and resources that keep all of us safe.

By taking domestic violence seriously and making sure victims have the supports and services they deserve, our states and communities send the message that we believe survivors and we do not condone violence, helping create the culture change we need to end abuse.

Whether we work as direct service advocates or preventionists, we are part of the movement to end domestic violence so that all people in Rhode Island can live safe, healthy lives free from abuse.





THE HEALTH IMPACT PYRAMID

The **Health Impact Pyramid** is a framework for improving public health. It depicts different levels of prevention, similar to the prevention continuum.³⁹

To achieve the greatest possible benefit for the health and well-being of our communities, we need to implement prevention strategies at every level of the pyramid. Prevention strategies at the lower levels of the pyramid have the greatest potential impact because they reach broader segments of the population and require less individual effort than clinical services or education.

Eighty-percent of what determines our health and well-being as individuals exists within our communities – in our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.⁴⁰

By working at the base of the pyramid to improve the conditions in our communities, we can prevent many health issues before they start – before we even step foot in a doctor's office or other clinical setting.

Similarly, the primary prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV) focuses on the aspects of our communities that make violence more or less likely to happen so we can stop violence before it begins and promote the conditions necessary for healthy relationships to thrive.





RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The RICADV's network of member agencies provide a wide array of services for victims, including emergency shelter, support groups, counseling services, and assistance with the legal system. For more information, visit the website of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence at www.ricadv.org.

To learn more about domestic violence and how you can help, contact the RICADV, visit our website, or follow us on social media.

THE HELPLINE: 1-800-494-8100

For 24/7 support, assistance, and information, call the confidential Rhode Island statewide Victims of Crime Helpline (1-800-494-8100) to speak with an advocate, or use the online chat at www.ricadv.org.



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- Jolayemi Ahamiojie, MPH RI Department of Health
- Yeimy Bakemon-Morel Day One
- Krista D'Amico RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
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FEATURED OUOTES

- **p. 3** Grace Lee Boggs, with Scott Kurashige. The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century. 2011.
- **p. 9** Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie. *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* 2022.
- **p. 13** bell hooks. A chat with the author of *All About Love: New Visions*. CNN. 2000.
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Front cover collage

- Top row, far left: Youth In Action
- Top row, second from left: Progreso Latino, Central Falls Food Pantry
- Top row, third from left: Newport Health Equity Zone, The Sidewalk Parade Project
- Second row, second from left: Newport Health Equity Zone, Aquidneck Community Table, Miantonomi Farmers Market
- **p. 12** ARISE (Alliance of RI Southeast Asians for Education)
- p. 24 Howson-Wright Photography

p. 28

- First from top: Progreso Latino, Adult Social Action Committee
- Second: Youth In Action, Youth Leadership Institute
- Third: Partnership for Providence Parks

p. 30

- First from top: Bike Newport
- Second: Newport Health Equity Zone

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"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way . . . on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully,

I can hear her breathing."

— Arundhati Roy



END NOTES

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