

## THE PARADIGM SHIFT FROM VIOLENCE RESPONSE TO PREVENTION

### Purpose

In this document, we will review five different paradigms that help us shift efforts to prevent violence from occurring, both in civilian and military communities.

We will review the following paradigm shifts that lead to a more effective approach to preventing violence:

1. Shifting from Awareness to Action
2. Shifting from the Individual to the Collective
3. Shifting from Reactive to Proactive Solutions
4. Shifting from a Problem-Focused to Solution-Focused Approach
5. Shifting from External Mandates to Intrinsic Motivation

### Background

Previously, efforts to address violence, which is inclusive of interpersonal violence and self-directed harm, focused on responding to impacted individuals and raising awareness about the problem. People wanted to ensure that those who experienced violence were supported, cared for, and provided the necessary resources and services to recover and move forward.

The original paradigms for addressing violence targeted people who had already experienced violence; these are known as response activities. This approach led to significant progress in advocacy, funding, policies, awareness-raising, and positive public perception.

When prevention professionals began to focus on primary prevention activities, many used the same paradigms developed specifically for response, but the practices and competencies necessary for response and primary prevention are not the same.

Unlike response activities, **primary prevention activities implement policies, programs, and practices that promote protective factors and reduce risk factors** across individuals, relationships, and organizations. Helping people recover and move forward after a violent incident is essential, but we can all agree that, ideally, it is best when people do not experience violence in the first place.

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### WHAT IS A PARADIGM?

A paradigm can be defined as an example or pattern, “an outstandingly clear or typical example or archetype.”

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### WHAT DOES “EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE” MEAN?

When we note that someone is “experiencing violence”, this refers to the victim and/or perpetrator in cases of interpersonal violence and the victim in cases of self-directed harm.

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### REFERENCE

*Edwards, D.J. (2016). Shift Happens: Shifting Paradigms from Response to Prevention.*

For more information, visit <http://www.alteristic.org>.

## PARADIGM #1: SHIFTING FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

The first step in addressing violence is to make community members aware of the problem of violence. However, there are costs of continuing to emphasize awareness once a community is aware of the problem:

1. Resources like time, money, and personnel are wasted.
2. There is little added value for participants.
3. Community members may experience resentment, fatigue, or resignation.
4. Community members may become desensitized to the messages.

**It is important to remember that building awareness and knowledge about violence were never the end goals.** Rather, they were the necessary first steps for both response and primary prevention. See the table below for differences between paradigms meant to build awareness and those that support action.

**Table 1-1. Paradigm 1: Shifting from Awareness to Action**

	Response Paradigm #1: Increase awareness around violence	Prevention Paradigm #1: Increase solution focused behaviors by building new skills
PURPOSE	Gain understanding of violence as a problem by increasing awareness and knowledge.	Connect individuals by fueling hope and possibility for prevention.
CONTENT	Information about violence prevention, including prevalence data, advocacy resources, and reporting mechanisms.	Types of preventative behaviors, including many options for different people with life experiences and personal identities.
METHODS	Disseminate information through events and social marketing.	Prevention activities with skill-building, practice, and application components.
GOAL	More community members connect to the issue, have a better understanding of it, and know how to get help if they or someone they know has been impacted.	Most community members develop skills and begin to implement prevention behaviors into their daily lives.



### Paradigm Shift #1 Example

Implement prevention activities that engage participants in performing bystander intervention behaviors such as intervening when they are faced with concerning or high-risk behaviors that could lead to violence and proactively contributing to positive social norms that are incompatible with violence.

## PARADIGM #2: SHIFTING FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE COLLECTIVE

The response paradigm focuses on the individual and seeks to provide support that ensures the well-being of those affected by violence. Therefore, when the field began to consider primary prevention, reaching one person was the only paradigm to choose from.

**Primary prevention is driven by setting norms within a community**, established by large numbers of people. Engaging one person or a small number of people is not adequate for primary prevention efforts to be effective.

**Success in prevention must be defined in relation to how many individuals engage in new and sustained preventative behaviors** because of prevention activities being implemented. View the table below to see how shifting the focus on the collective can change the measurement of success of the prevention approach.

**Table 1-2 Paradigm 2: Shifting from the Individual to the Collective**

	Response Paradigm #2: Focus on the Individual	Prevention Paradigm #2: Focus on the Collective
PRIMARY GOAL	Support individuals impacted by violence to gain what they need; promote individual well-being, healing, and growth.	Engage community members in prevention behaviors and proactive norm setting to generate climate or culture change.
TARGET AUDIENCE	Individuals who experience violence.	Entire community as change agents (i.e., "the collective").
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	Helping one person is considered success. Raising awareness of the issue in the community can also gauge success.	Engaging many community members is essential because numbers matter; to shift norms, we must engage a critical mass of people.



### Paradigm Shift #2 Example

When prevention staff are engaging all community members in prevention activities that support healthy masculinity and norms incompatible with violence, they are using a prevention paradigm.

## PARADIGM #3: SHIFTING FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

Response activities are designed to be **reactive and swiftly respond to incidents of violence after they happen**. The goal is to ensure survivors of violence have access to supportive services, and in cases of interpersonal violence, perpetrators are held appropriately accountable for their actions. Even as the field has moved toward primary prevention of violence, annual trainings have often been mandated in response to an incident of violence, allowing participants to perceive the trainings as punitive and reactive.

Primary prevention, on the other hand, is designed to be proactive, to get ahead of the problem and prevent it before it ever occurs. The goal is to ensure that **community members engage in proactive prevention behaviors that establish positive norms that are incompatible with violence** and that **foster shared ownership of and responsibility for community safety**.

**Table 1-3. Shifting from Reactive to Proactive**

	Response Paradigm #3: Reactive Strategies	Prevention Paradigm #3: Proactive Strategies
METHODS	Respond to incidents of violence <i>after they have already happened</i> .	Prevent incidents of violence <i>from happening in the first place</i> .
STRATEGY	Ensure those who have experienced violence have access to supportive, empowering, and healing services. For interpersonal violence, ensure perpetrators are held appropriately accountable for their actions.	Ensure community members engage in proactive prevention behaviors that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish positive norms that are incompatible with violence, and</li> <li>2) Foster shared ownership and responsibility for community safety.</li> </ol>
GOALS	Establish avenues to provide and disseminate information about reporting, support (e.g., counseling, medical, advocacy), adjudication, and more.	Implement prevention activities that equip installations and organizations to establish environments that promote protective factors against violence.



### Paradigm Shift #3 Example

Social-emotional learning programs provide the training necessary to ensure the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. Such training can be used to prevent various forms of violence and promote safe, supportive, and respectful military communities.

## PARADIGM #4: SHIFTING FROM A PROBLEM FOCUSED TO A SOLUTION FOCUSED APPROACH

When the field developed training and programming to address violence, participants were framed as a potential part of the problem. The problem with using this framework for is that most people do not relate to or identify with experiencing violence and therefore remove themselves from prevention efforts.

**Prevention personnel must reframe their military community members as part of the solution.** Put simply, this means an individual's safety is the community's responsibility. And when an individual's safety is at risk, the entire community is impacted.

**Table 1-4. Shifting from a Problem Focus to a Solution Focus**

	Response Paradigm #4: Problem Focused Approach	Prevention Paradigm #4: Solution Focused Approach
ASSUMPTIONS	For interpersonal violence, men may be potential perpetrators and women may be potential victims.	Everyone is an ally, active bystander, and/or change agent. The roles can be applied to anyone and everyone, inside or outside a military environment.
ROLES	In cases of interpersonal violence, potential perpetrators help define consent and policy enforcement messages. Potential victims help define risk reduction strategies and information about reporting options and support services.	Empower individuals to understand their roles and develop solution focused skills to actively behave as allies, active bystanders, and change agents. Focus is on positive behaviors.
CONTENT	For interpersonal violence, people are either a potential victim or potential perpetrator. Recipients of message are to be impacted by the <i>problem</i> .	No one wants violence to exist in the first place. Recipients of the message are to be a part of the proactive <i>solution</i> .



### Paradigm Shift #4 Example

The message to instill across military communities is that EVERYONE has a role to play in prevention, even if not tasked with prevention activities in one's day-to-day job. Respectful military climates established through proactive sexual harassment prevention policies and procedures is one example of a solution-focused approach to prevention.

## PARADIGM #5: SHIFTING FROM EXTERNAL MANDATES TO INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

The response paradigm focuses on external mandates like laws and policies to keep behavior in check. Prevention efforts, on the other hand, rely on activities to induce the intrinsic motivation of individuals to change their behavior. **Prevention efforts are most effective when community members are intrinsically motivated to get involved.** Intrinsic motivation is achieved when behavior is driven by internal rewards or reasons (as opposed to external rewards or reasons). Therefore, **prevention activities must be strategically designed to engage intrinsic motivation.**

**Table 1-5. Shifting from External Mandates to Intrinsic Motivation**

	Response Paradigm #5: External Mandates	Prevention Paradigm #5: Intrinsic Motivation
GOAL	Knowledge is gained.	Behavior is changed.
MOTIVATION	Community members learn basic information about laws and policies related to violence and the systems and services available to support those who experience violence.	Post the training, community members are engaged in prevention behaviors through individual buy-in. Participants and others self-select to change their behaviors to actively contribute to a culture of safety and responsibility.
PREMISE	Typically, externally mandated; buy-in is not required to simply receive information.	Involvement due to intrinsic motivation (i.e., internal rewards and reasons; behavior is naturally satisfying).
PARTICIPANTS	Frequently mandatory.	Ideally voluntary.
MESSENGERS	Those charged with enforcing policies (e.g., JAG, MP, etc.).	Prevention practitioners, socially influential service members, and unexpected messengers.



### Paradigm Shift #5 Example

Teaching healthy, safe dating and intimate relationship skills can work to build communication and conflict resolution skills as well as expectations for caring, respectful, and non-violent behavior. Successful application and use of these skills can create motivation to continue use in the future.