

UPPER VALLEY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT SUMMIT SUMMARY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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WORLD CAFÉS

WHAT ARE THE FACTORS IN OUR COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTING TO THIS NEED?

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- Hard to talk about. Different places use different definitions. (For reference, NH and VT talk about domestic violence as familial violence.) But there is still confusion between domestic violence vs. sexual violence vs. stalking, etc.
- CHNAs pick up what's on people's minds. So it's interesting that domestic violence came up this year, even though we know it's been a problem every year (since the dawn of time).
- Domestic violence is connected to a lot of the other needs, and in fact might be considered the root cause of some of them.
- Stigma also makes it hard to talk about (similar to the stigma of substance misuse?)
- Domestic violence prevents people from receiving health care, and other services they may need.
- Teens who experience dating violence are more likely to be in an abusive relationship.
- Our community is still not comfortable talking about these issues with young kids, but the issues are important, both for kids witnessing domestic violence and in reference to child sexual violence
- Lots of interconnectedness between the issues; child abuse and neglect is an element of domestic violence.
- Intersectionality also with seniors, as homes become more inter-generational
 - Grandparents are not always able/willing to hold their kids accountable, when grandkids may be in harm's way due to the kids' choices
 - Grandparents are raising grandkids more and more. Do they have the tools they need to raise kids in this day and age (smart phones, internet, but also gender power dynamics)? It is hard for even well intentioned care givers.
- Looking around the room, it feels hard to have domestic violence at its own table, when really it should be sitting at the table of Substance Misuse, Mental Health, child abuse/neglect, etc.
- Blaming victims. E.g. children get taken away if a woman can't keep them safe, rather than giving her the resources she needs to keep her kids safe. Women who come forward are punished.
- Challenge of technology with electronic (i.e. invisible) abuse. Online relationships can definitely be abusive, but can be hard to describe.
- It's a vulnerable thing to talk about. People might not be ready to share or talk about domestic violence.
- It's a "hot trap in the media" – people are just starting to talk about it, but don't have the language.
- Impacted by substance misuse and addiction ("he only hits me when he's drinking")
- No housing available – survivors need safe, affordable housing to leave an abusive relationship
- Valley News doesn't cover the stories well.
- This is an invisible problem.
- People don't know where this fits in the grand scheme of things.
- People don't connect domestic violence with sexual violence.

- People who still subscribe to the ideology that women are not equal to (in fact, are less than) men.
- “What’s my responsibility?” “What impacts me?”

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- Economic disadvantage; unemployment
- Sometimes just looking at a community you can tell there would likely be domestic violence; poverty is an underlying cause
- Depression – when you need to let off stress, leads to abuse; when you are economically comfortable in your life there are fewer reasons to lash out
- Substance misuse – or is it a chicken and egg situation?
- With Domestic Violence, everything is interconnected; all the factors are tied together
- Sometimes in wealthier communities the abuse is more hidden
- Violence can take many forms, not just physical; it is easy to see physical abuse but not always other kinds of abuse; e.g., spousal controlling situations
- Maybe in some communities domestic violence is more socially tolerated, so in some communities people may look past abuse
- Lack of social services; domestic violence shelters can be filled, or help is not available; people can feel trapped; people are hesitant to leave their situation for a variety of reasons
- Financial insecurity
- People who have experienced abuse as a child; important to look deeper into each case
- Sometimes, women opt to stay in unhealthy relationships because they cannot afford housing on their own; lack of resources are reasons for not leaving unhealthy relationships; even leaving a pet behind is a reason to stay; people can’t afford to move out
- Alcohol is a factor; may lead to sexual assault, especially on college campuses; college culture issue
- Financially secure families deny that abuse could be happening to them so it becomes a very isolating issue – this can’t be happening to me.
- Violence is more visible in poor neighborhoods where everyone is close to one another and sometimes harder to see in wealthier families
- Sometimes the community tends to ignore domestic violence because it is uncomfortable
- Sometimes a parent may feel that if they come forward they may lose their children to DCF so they don’t come forward
- In a small community people know each other and therefore are hesitant to report domestic abuse.
- There is a stigma associated with domestic violence – we don’t talk about it as a community; people keep it private; there is a shame in coming forward
- The dysfunctional way we interact, rooted in our childhood, fuels the problem; at times we don’t have the necessary skills to be contributing community members
- Social media fuels the problem; people they don’t even know can spur abuse; a text can be abusive; children start so young – things they would never say in person, they can say online
- Substance abuse is a contributing factor
- Economic stress
- Abuse is accepted, tolerated, often not reported

WHAT COMMUNITY ASSETS ARE HELPING TO ADDRESS THIS NEED?

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- Lebanon has been serving as a control town in a UNH prevention research study
- DH has been developing patient screenings for social determinants of health, which include a question around personal safety. Eventually this will be rolled out to the whole patient population
- Paid family leave – gives people more freedom to seek out the services they need
- Women are starting to feel more comfortable sharing
- Employers/bosses who care enough/know enough to refer people to WISE

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- All the community service organizations that can identify the various warning signs, e.g. WISE
- WISE's domestic violence training is very helpful, e.g., the program they did at LISTEN
- Teachers are now more attuned to identify abuse among students
- Human service agencies do a better job identifying and addressing domestic violence problems – e.g., offering ride-share programs, Reach Up programs
- Confidentiality is important, so victims are comfortable coming forward; in small communities people know each other
- The more that WISE gets out to other organizations, the better. Community needs to be educated about warning signs.
- EMS has a lot more training for warning signs for neglect and abuse; they then can trigger the appropriate service for that person
- Also, medical staff are better trained to look for warning signs
- Co-located services through WISE; at the Haven, Windsor, Listen, Dartmouth, and Child Protection; Good Neighbor Health Clinic
- Teachers are better informed
- VT Agency of Human Services; helps victims find jobs
- Turning Points and Safe Line
- Work United Program
- Medical community does more screening now
- Planned Parenthood
- Law enforcement; LAP protocol – trained to go through a checklist to look for abuse; trained law enforcement is a huge asset; if they feel something is not right
- Hanover PD; You Got Options
- Dial 211
- We are fortunate that we are in a community that has access to cutting-edge research
- David's House

"IF YOU HAD A MAGIC WAND, HOW WOULD YOU ADDRESS THIS NEED?"

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- WISE professionals would like to see WISE identified as a resource for everyone, not just victims. How do we invite people in to learn more, as a community at large, about gender-based violence?
- Use marketing power of D-H to spread the message that "safety is a part of healthcare"
- Link crisis centers/advocacy centers to clinical teams, while also providing training to the clinical teams (like the 0-3 early childhood work)
- Help people understand the broader impact of this type of violence – tell the story in a broader framework
- Start with the healthcare industry employees.
- Develop training pipelines for women working with WISE to secure employment
- Mentorship of young men
- Fewer restrictions attached to funding, to allow agencies more flexibility to respond to the community's needs

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- Everything is intertwined so it is difficult to say there is just one thing to address; domestic violence has to change with the overall culture
- More education; something as simple as going to the dentist twice a year would help; care providers can spot problems
- If you are abused as a child, you are more likely to abuse as an adult – so more early intervention is key
- There is a power dynamic in human interactions that seems like it will always be there – but there are healthier outlets than abusing someone else
- Some people have learned to channel their frustrations in a healthier way
- Why doesn't WISE do more training in schools? Having more educators trained is important. Also, school districts need to prioritize their curriculum offerings so that there is more opportunity to educate students about domestic violence.
- WISE could use more trained staff. Could always use more funding from community donations.
- Prevention programs get the short end of the stick; prevention can't be measured
- School students are a captured audience – key to changing the culture, but it needs to go beyond that
- Cultural differences – e.g. men crying and showing emotions – are hard to change
- It is not just men abusing women, there can be same-sex abuse; sometimes it is women abusing men; anyone can be abused
- Men/boys can endure sexual violence in hazing which leads to bad consequences down the road; there is a lot to unpack about the male culture
- Legal process doesn't always address domestic violence; sometimes abusers just get a slap on the wrist
- How do we reach people not in schools? Having a program in multiple locations, workplaces
- There needs to be a "want" to change. Sometimes that happens only after an arrest. How do you change the mindset of wanting to change?
- USA Hockey and other sports now have coach training to stop sport team hazing
- Are there enough workplace resources on domestic violence?
- Transitional housing for women and children; immediately available
- Language to use to interrupt; "bystander intervention" - to address the problem in the moment

- High school curriculum – would be great to offer a whole semester on domestic violence. Need more time with students than just a short time in health class
- Better orientation at college campus on the topic (Dartmouth); advocacy is not mentioned
- Not just the students, faculty need training as well
- The answer can't just be "send the problem to WISE" – we all need to address the issue
- We don't talk about domestic violence in the workplace; not enough employee training
- Needs to be a cultural shift; #metoo movement is moving toward that goal; it is a public health concern
- Men experience violence too
- More emergency housing
- Childcare
- Flexible employment hours – have employers be flexible if a victim needs to seek help
- Emergency funding for victim who leaves a financially-secure home
- More unrestricted funding; there is little funding for prevention
- More community awareness
- Foundations for Gender Based Violence is a way to educate the community; a 15-hour workshop; four times a year; enrollment limited to 12. If there was more money WISE do this more often.
- Doing more conferences like this one – getting the word out
- How do we change the culture; change the mindset? Awareness doesn't always change culture. How can we use peer pressure? Domestic violence is not a topic people gravitate to, how do we change that?
- How do we start these conversations? More community forums, more workplace education.
- Need to influence media
- Find creative ways to bring up the topic of domestic violence