



Sustaining Collaboration

What does it take to maintain partnerships? Collaboration is essential, but it can be difficult to achieve and sustain. This tip sheet builds on the guidance from Violence Prevention in Practice with information on ways to support partnerships and make progress as a group.

Focus on Win-Win Solutions

Violence prevention requires work across many sectors – each of which have their own priorities and needs. The key is working together so everyone wins. Acknowledge the various needs and perspectives of each stakeholder. Identify joint strategies to make the work worthwhile for everyone.

Build Trusting, Respectful Relationships

It is critical to cultivate meaningful personal and professional relationships. Here are some ideas when you are bringing new people together:

- Create camaraderie by introducing partners and identifying opportunities for them to help one another. Ensure partners understand each other's roles in preventing violence. Encourage them to share information and ideas, express gratitude, and give credit freely. Ideally, team members will keep partners in mind and look out for one another.
- Make good use of people's time. If you design a meeting, make it worthwhile and dynamic. Set clear expectations about participation. Avoid meetings where people simply report out with no meaningful purpose or interaction.
- Remember what you all care about. Invoking shared values—the fundamental principles and beliefs of the group—establishes a supportive atmosphere and space for collaboration, even if people disagree on some things. Remind partners of the Shared Vision that was developed to guide the violence prevention plan.

Focus on Accountability and Celebrate Success

Create processes that encourage transparency and accountability for assigned roles and responsibilities. Integrate regular discussions on action steps and progress. Take time to share credit for success and celebrate your achievements. Even if they seem small, these wins are necessary for realizing your group's shared vision.

Provide Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

Make sure participants feel they have a meaningful role and that their feedback and involvement are valued. Build opportunities for meaningful dialogue into meetings. Consider whether it would be helpful to put commitments in writing through a memorandum of agreement or something similar.

Develop Leadership Skills and Organizational Capacity

Look for ways to provide training and capacity building on a regular basis (see Identifying Community Resources and What Factors Influence Implementation for more information on capacity). This will keep partners engaged and develop the leadership and ability of the group. Include training and resources on various topics related to violence prevention. Keep members informed on new issues and resources related to violence prevention. Identify potential champions in the group and give them opportunities to develop their leadership skills.



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Prevent and Manage Group Conflicts

Recognize and resolve tension, power dynamics, and other group difficulties before they happen.

- A lead agency sharing power and decision-making responsibility helps the group work as a team and collectively work together to implement the violence prevention plan. Your group will remain an independent, self-sustaining organization even if outside factors change.
- Honor commitments and follow through on promises and agreements. If plans need to change, explain to the group the reasons for changes. Work with the group to develop a solution that meets everyone's needs as much as possible.

Establish Ongoing Communication

Provide updates and opportunities for discussion among stakeholders. This can also help people remember their role in the overall plan. Include regular progress reports to share lessons learned and to encourage transparency and accountability.

Provide Support

Don't underestimate the resources and infrastructure required to sustain collaboration around violence prevention. Look for potential in-kind resources or funding for the logistics of collaboration. Identify partners who can provide various types of support such as member recruitment and engagement, meeting logistics, and communication activities related to the violence prevention plan.

Take Time to Reflect

Partnerships may change over time, and so will the needs of the group. Review the stakeholders involved in the group on a regular basis using tools such as the *Prevention Multiplier* or a *Stakeholder Analysis*. This will help identify if anyone is missing or if the roles and responsibilities need to be reconsidered. Build a process for evaluating partners' experiences with collaboration and collecting feedback.

Additional Resources



Maintain a Coalition (Community Tool Box)

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/maintain-a-coalition/main>



Prevention Collaboration in Action (SAMSHA)

<http://captcollaboration.edc.org/>