

# **Kingston Youth Sexual Violence Prevention Assessment**

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***Executive Summary & Next Steps***

**Commissioned by:**  
Kingston & Frontenac Anti-Violence  
Coordinating Committee

**In partnership with:**  
Sexual Assault Centre Kingston &  
St. Lawrence Youth Association

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This report describes the findings of a community assessment conducted by Bailey Gerrits & Rebecca Rapoport commissioned by KFACC in the Spring of 2015 to better address sexual violence prevention for youth in the greater Kingston area. The strategic goals of this assessment were to better understand sexual violence among youth, current & past strategies to prevent sexual violence in the greater Kingston area, gaps & barriers, and to recommend next steps.

Our findings are based on a thorough literature review of academic & community resources & extensive stakeholder engagement through three methods: focus groups, interviews & an online questionnaire.

The literature review identified that prevention efforts need to improve knowledge & develop positive skills with respect to sexual violence & healthy relationships at three stages of prevention/intervention: primary, secondary & tertiary. Effective prevention must be community-based, grounded in theory, & ongoing through multiple mediums to include specific & general prevention programming.

Through our engagement with over 40 stakeholders from youth-serving & gender-based violence organizations, we identified areas of concern, current prevention strategies, gaps in prevention efforts, and potential barriers for further prevention.

The areas of concern are not meant to target particular youth populations, but rather identify those often left out or not adequately addressed in regards to prevention efforts. Themes includes youth under 12, alcohol & drug-facilitated sexual assault, disabilities, gender, home insecurity, poverty, rural residence, sexuality, technology & social media, and youth outside the school system.

Stakeholders also identified several current & past prevention strategies that fall under primary, secondary, tertiary & individual efforts.

As result, it is clear that prevention of sexual violence among youth in the greater Kingston area is occurring, but there are gaps. There are numerous under-served youth, under-resourced efforts, missed opportunities, & areas for growth. Gaps identified include: little engagement with parents & caregivers, lack of primary & secondary prevention, little bystander education, under-engaging boys, & the need for more direct conversations about sexual violence.

The gaps exist because of structural, organizational, financial, & knowledge-based barriers. Our analysis revealed several answers that begin to explain why these gaps exist. One, some community organizations are working in silos. There is no common, integrated structure. Two, there is insufficient community leadership on sexual

violence among youth. Three, it is difficult to access youth & ensure their buy-in. Four, there is a lack of adequate training for facilitators and those engaging with youth. Five, few community organizations include sexual violence prevention in their mandate or in the job description of youth workers. And, last, but not least, there is a lack of ongoing, sufficient funding & resources for prevention efforts.

From our findings, we have the follow recommendations:

- (1) Establish better collaboration with Kingston Frontenac Anti-Violence Coordinating Committee (KFACC) & Child & Youth Service Planning Committee (CYSPC) & between community organizations;
- (2) Provide more resources for secondary prevention;
- (3) Employ a harm reduction model;
- (4) Include prevention in organizational mandates & job descriptions;
- (5) Engage youth in future consultations & foster youth leadership;
- (6) Incorporate bystander education into future programming;
- (7) Provide more funding for primary prevention from the government & granting bodies;
- (8) Explicitly talk about sexual violence;
- (9) Explicitly talk about healthy sexuality;
- (10) Engage parents, caregivers & guardians;
- (11) Ensure programs are audience specific;
- (12) Review school implementation of the new curriculum in one year;
- (13) Run a community-wide multi-media awareness campaign;
- (14) Engage boys & men to prevent sexual violence;
- (15) Implement ongoing train the trainer sessions;
- (16) And, offer media literacy training.

We invite you to read the remainder of the report for more information.

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## **NEXT STEPS**

### ***SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE***

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Prevention in the greater Kingston area is largely executed in response to incidents, on a one-off, ad hoc, reactive basis. Effective prevention strategies anticipate the community needs & work towards ensuring that violence does not happen in the first place. The Kingston community needs to engage youth before sexual & dating violence occurs. Organizations need to explicitly address consent, healthy sexuality, healthy relationships, bystander intervention, gender norms, rape culture, alcohol & drug-facilitated sexual assault, and sexual violence. The following recommendations will help shift the community towards a more comprehensive, community-based, proactive-focused & harm-reduction prevention strategy.

### **1. ESTABLISH BETTER COLLABORATION**

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We recommend that the greater Kingston community leaders come together to address sexual violence through high-level, meaningful collaboration between organizations. For example, one avenue could include better integrating two existing collaboration bodies: Kingston & Frontenac Anti-Violence Coordinating Committee (KFACC) and the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington Children & Youth Services Planning Committee (CYSPC) around prevention initiatives. The community is well positioned to begin collaboration at the meta-level. This overseeing collaboration could develop best practices for sexual violence prevention, conduct train the trainer sessions, acquire bystander programming & other prevention programming, develop a community tool kit about how to engage in prevention, and oversee ongoing research in this area.

Collaboration also needs to happen on a second level between agencies & frontline staff to provide system level support and could include offering training, integrating prevention to existing programs, better community referrals, further research, and support developing a community tool kit & best practices. We recommend that KFACC and CYSPC ensure that their member organizations are better collaborating on issues of sexual violence prevention.

### **2. PROVIDE MORE RESOURCES BEFORE JUSTICE**

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One of the clear gaps in Kingston is a lack of secondary prevention. There is a huge need to identify and work with youth around concerning violent & sexualized behaviours. St. Lawrence Youth Association has developed an assessment & treatment program for these youth. What they are missing is sufficient funding to offer their program. This would be a key service to one, field queries from schools or

concerned parties about concerning behaviours; and two, provide the appropriate supports and, in some cases, this means educating the school or concerned party about normal sexual development.

To compliment individual assessments, resources need to also be allocated towards addressing peer cultures that exhibit and/or support concerning violent & sexualized behaviours. These programs need to address consent, peer leadership, gender norms, misogyny, and rape culture, among other topics.

When specific incidents around sexual violence or concerning sexual & violent behaviours occur, there needs to be an extended community-based and/or school-based response to the individual & supporting peer group. These secondary strategies compliment primary prevention. If primary prevention strategies are well deployed, hopefully over time secondary & tertiary strategies will be needed less.

### **3. EMPLOY A HARM REDUCTION MODEL**

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Youth (not all, but many) drink alcohol, have sex, use social media, & watch porn. There are various behaviours identified by stakeholders that can be seen to contribute to experiences of and risk of perpetrating sexual violence, such as alcohol use, drug use, sexual activity, sexting, porn consumption, & playing excessive violent video games. A harm reduction model around these activities focuses on reducing harmful consequences (of concern here, sexual violence). A harm reduction model respects an individual right to choice & seeks to address inequality among youth. The focus is not telling youth what not to do, but focusing on providing information on safe & responsible behaviours and providing a non-judgmental, safe space for youth & facilitators to engage around these issues with the goal of preventing sexual violence by acknowledging the reality of the world youth live in.

### **4. INCORPORATE IN MANDATES & JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

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In order for the community to address prevention of sexual violence, organizations need to include prevention in their mandate and/or job descriptions. We recommend that organizations look into areas where they can direct staff, resources, & time towards prevention and that organizations consider incorporating prevention of sexual violence into their mandate. Such a move will curb the informal off-the-side-of-their-desk, problem of sexual violence prevention.

## **5. ENGAGE YOUTH, FOSTER YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

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Missing from this report was the youth voice. The next step is to engage youth in a needs assessment to understand what types of prevention they need, how they are experiencing sexual violence, & what types of prevention would be effective.

The second step would be to foster youth leadership to become part of the process of preventing sexual violence among their peers. Key organizations that could take the lead include Pathways to Education, GIRLS Inc., Boys and Girls Club, Sexual Assault Centre Kingston, and Y2K.

## **6. INCORPORATE BYSTANDER EDUCATION**

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The literature is clear; bystander education is an important tool in preventing sexual violence. It does not target specific people as potential perpetrators and victims; rather, it emphasizes how everyone is implicated in preventing sexual violence. It has the power to greatly reduce sexual violence and challenge rape culture. Bystander education should be incorporated into all primary prevention programming.

To better ensure that primary prevention effectively engages in bystander education, we recommend that interested organizations more thoroughly research the best bystander programs for their target audience.

## **7. ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT & GRANTING BODIES NEED TO PROVIDE MORE PREVENTION FUNDING**

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**“Prevention is the first thing needed and the last thing funded” – Judith Moses**

Prevention efforts need money. There is a community will to address and prevent sexual violence, but a lack of funding. Without sustainable funding to hire facilitators, prevention will likely fall by the wayside or continue to be conducted in a piecemeal way. We recommend funding secondary prevention, further research, organizational funding toward youth and outreach coordinators in prevention, a primary prevention media campaign, training of the trainer, parent outreach, and money towards the oversight/coordination of prevention in Kingston.

We also recommend that these granting bodies do not shift operational funds towards prevention in the place of supporting survivors, but rather prioritize sexual violence prevention and perhaps find new monies for these needed services. Even though more prevention work needs to occur and even though with more prevention other services will hopefully become less needed, prevention efforts will not end sexual violence tomorrow and services to survivors, victims, perpetrators, etc. will continue to be needed.

## **8. EXPLICITLY TALK ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

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Any prevention strategy needs to explicitly address sexual violence. Youth are experiencing sexual violence at extremely high rates & skirting around the issue doesn't do anyone any good. We understand that there are different ways to talk about sexual violence, but at the most basic level, preventive efforts need to explicitly discuss sexual violence with age appropriate content.

Preventing sexual violence includes healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, bystander education, but the literature is clear that prevention must also include debunking rape myths and defining sexual violence. Of note, sexual violence prevention cannot simply be subsumed under bullying prevention & mental health initiatives unless it is explicitly identified & addressed.

## **9. HEALTHY SEXUALITY**

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Many youth engage in sexual activity, by themselves, online, and/or with other people. To address sexual violence, we need to address healthy sexuality. Healthy sexuality, positive discussions of sex, and harm reduction focus are necessary components of sexual violence prevention. We know that the new curriculum may address healthy sexuality, however, it is unclear how that will impact youth. So, we recommend a follow-up with youth in school in one year's time to discuss the new curriculum. As well, we recommend that programming that engages youth outside the school system and programming that engages parents with information and training on healthy sexuality, positive discussions of sex, with a harm reduction focus.

## **10. PARENTS & CAREGIVERS & GUARDIANS**

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Prevention of sexual violence doesn't just need to happen with youth; it needs to include parents, caregivers & guardians to educate them on prevention of sexual violence among youth, healthy sexuality & relationship, and training around talking with youth about the issue of sexual violence. We recommend that an organization (or organizations) develop or acquire a program that will be offered to parents, caregivers & guardians. We recommend collaborating with school boards, community organizations and youth to ensure the programs meet the needs of the greater Kingston community. **There is a potential for the positive impact of the new curriculum and community prevention efforts to be undone at home.**

## **11. GET THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE**

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There is no golden ticket. Prevention needs to be widespread, with both general and specific programs. We know that programs need to be age-specific, account for

gender-queer mode of being, and cultural difference. How programs are implemented need to take into account specific youth being targeted. For example home insecure youth might not attend a three month long program, thus, length, time, and message need to be tailored to the intended audience.

We recognize that there is specific programming for certain youth, including so-called high-risk youth, youth with disabilities, school youth, and so on. We recommend that individual organizations and the larger overseeing body conduct research for particular youth populations that account for how various social, cultural, and economic positions intersect to impact experiences of violence & research specific programming for these youth.

## **12. REVIEW SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION IN ONE-YEAR**

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The curriculum is changing to include more information about sexual violence & sexual health. We don't know how these changes will impact the greater Kingston area. We recommend an analysis in one year's time to see how community & schools can collaborate. More immediately, we recommend that community organizations try to collaborate with schools as much as they can to address any potential gaps in the programming & support the effective implementation of this change.

## **13. RUN A COMMUNITY-WIDE MULTI-MEDIA ANTI-SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

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We have identified the importance of community-based prevention & one key component of this type of prevention is creating awareness among the community. One way to create awareness is through an area-wide media campaign that draws on local celebrity figures. We recommend investing in a multi-media campaign focused on bystander education, dispelling rape myths, or creating awareness in another capacity.

What specific campaign and what media needs to be further researched. We specifically recommend engaging youth about the type of multi-media campaign. The City of Kingston could take a lead role in developing and running this multi-media anti-sexual violence awareness campaign.

## **14. ENGAGE BOYS & MEN**

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It is essential to engage boys in prevention of sexual violence. In youth groups, boys are still the primary perpetrators of sexual violence & girls the victims. Stakeholders as well as the literature were adamant about the need to engage young men on this issue, not because most men are perpetrators or potential perpetrators, but because boys are



also being exposed to sexual violence among their peers & they have the most opportunity to interrupt violence behavior by modeling healthy masculinity. While talking about an incidence among a group of youth in the area with sexual violence and social media, one educator remarked that it was especially “disturbing” because the boys thought that this violence was okay. We recommend that programs specifically look to engage young boys & men, without decreasing their services to girls, women, and other folks.

## **15. IMPLEMENT A TRAIN THE TRAINER LEARNING SESSION**

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As of September 2015 the Ontario curriculum will include more aspects around sexual health, consent, & prevention of sexual violence. One stakeholder commented during a focus group: “Changes within education is important but training also needs to happen for teaching...if (teachers) cannot use (the right) language with students it can add to the situation.”

What are missing in Kingston are more opportunities for training for facilitators and youth workers, and those who work within the schools’ systems, around the realities of sexual violence. We heard from several community members that training is sometimes occurring within house, but they also eagerly asserted the need for community-wide training opportunities. We recommend that an organizing body offer yearly or bi-annual “train the trainer” sessions for youth & sexual violence workers and management around sexual violence prevention for youth.

## **16. MEDIA LITERACY**

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The widespread concern around social media and youth’s use of gaming, online activity, & mobile devices indicates that media literacy from a harm reduction standpoint is absolutely necessary in Kingston’s prevention repertoire.

We recommend that an organizing body offer media literacy training for trainers, either as a part of the train the trainer programming or as a separate programming. We identified key programs that already offer media literacy for youth; however, we recommend that these programs consider updating their program from a harm reduction standpoint.

