

Building and measuring an effective online prevention Community of Practice: PreventConnect's sexual violence and domestic violence prevention practitioners learn from each other online



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Overview

With funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) provides online programs to support the primary prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence.

PreventConnect, a national online community of practice, is one of these supported projects in which technology is used to increase the capacity of local, state, and national practitioners to advance the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence, with a focus on primary prevention efforts.

Methods

Analysis of PreventConnect activity data. This included information on participation in podcasts, web conferences, email listserv, wiki, Facebook, and Twitter.

PreventConnect User Survey. A web-based survey explored the needs of the primary prevention community and how PreventConnect helped address those needs. A total of 210 people from 39 states and four countries (U.S., Australia, Canada, and South Africa) participated.

Interviews with key prevention practitioners. Telephone interviews explored the usefulness of PreventConnect activities; influence those activities had on participants' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices; and communication and collaboration among prevention practitioners. A total of 27 practitioners—including RPE (Rape Prevention and Education), DELTA (Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances), and DELTA PREP (Preparing and Raising Expectations for Prevention) grantees—participated.

Video testimonials. Survey respondents and key informant interviewees provided video testimonials describing their experiences with PreventConnect and the changes that they or their organization has made as a result of participating in PreventConnect activities. Videos are available for viewing on PreventConnect.org

Evaluation Questions

1. What aspects of PreventConnect are the most and least effective for advancing primary prevention?
2. How has PreventConnect impacted the primary prevention community of practice?
3. How can PreventConnect be improved to further increase the primary prevention community of practice?

Findings

Increased knowledge and expertise. PreventConnect activities connect participants to resources that allow them to deepen their knowledge and streamline their thinking of primary prevention practices in the area of sexual assault and domestic violence.

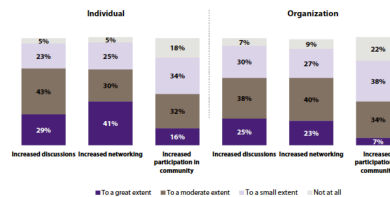
Improved organizational policies and procedures. PreventConnect participants cited many examples of how participating in PreventConnect activities led to improvements in their strategic planning processes, primary prevention practices, and use of social media to communicate to their member organizations and to the public.

Increased discussions and networking. PreventConnect participants shared their ideas, resources, and experiences. A high percentage of participants reported increasing discussions with other people and organizations, as well as increased networking and information sharing after participating in PreventConnect activities.

E13. How effective has PreventConnect been in ...*	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not at all effective
Improving information flow and knowledge reuse among PreventConnect participants and their respective organizations	75%	25%	1%
Creating a safe environment for the sharing of knowledge and expertise	74%	25%	1%
Making PreventConnect participants aware of the knowledge, skills, and expertise of other participants in the community	71%	28%	2%
Encouraging PreventConnect participants to engage in higher-level thinking	66%	32%	2%
Building a sense of trust among PreventConnect participants	62%	36%	2%
Enabling the application of knowledge to practice	58%	41%	2%
Developing the capacity of PreventConnect participants to engage in collaborative problem solving	54%	44%	2%
Improving relationships among PreventConnect users	44%	52%	5%

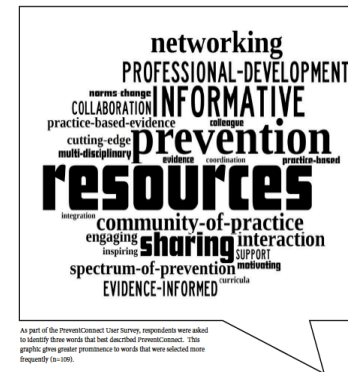
*Excludes respondents who indicated "not applicable"

E11. Extent to which participation in PreventConnect activities has led to changes in networking and information sharing*



Implications

Online communities are effective in creating a national/international community dedicated to improving public health practice. Online technology can augment in person meeting and training to build a robust community.



As part of the PreventConnect User Survey, respondents were asked to identify three words that best described PreventConnect. This graphic gives greater prominence to words that were selected more frequently (n=100).

97% of respondents reported that they would recommend PreventConnect activities to a friend.

74% of survey respondents consider themselves members of the PreventConnect Community.

Next Steps

- Explore means for increasing participation in social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Prepare and present prevention materials for multiple audiences.
- Discuss options to engage users in PreventConnect activities shown to have the greatest impact.
- Provide resources to aid in organizational level change. Explore efforts to increase collaboration among PreventConnect members.

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