

Transformation: A Year of Development and Transition

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The 2007-2008 year has truly been a transition year for EMPACT-SPC, Trauma Healing Services (THS) Department. In November of 2007, I started full time with THS, after working part time since March of 2007. My co-facilitator joined our department at the same time, as a Trauma Advocate and became my partner in delivering the Sexual Violence Prevention Bystander Intervention curriculum. A Clinical Coordinator for THS was promoted to the Manager position of the THS department, leaving the ADHS Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator position open. Once I evaluated her former position and took a look at the Bystander Intervention curriculum developed the previous year, I knew this was the perfect position for me. Finally, on January 1st 2008, Empact-SPC's Sexual Violence Prevention Project was fully staffed!

The irony of me stepping into this position is amazing. When I was an undergraduate at Arizona State University and enrolled in research methods, my papers and research were always on the influence media played in our society as it relates to violence. Once I read the Bystander curriculum I knew this program and position were right up my ally. Our Bystander Intervention program focuses on increasing the knowledge and skills of bystanders in the community to prevent sexual assault from initially occurring. Our objectives aim to help participants understand how media influences and social norms can influence patterns of escalating behavior that may lead to sexual violence. Furthermore, we aim to increase empathy towards victims of sexual assault, decrease acceptance of rape myths and increase participant skill level and comfort level by giving them confidence to intervene in situations that may escalate to sexual violence. Our curriculum is 6 hours long and designed to be delivered in a multi-modal format.

After EMPACT-SPC's Sexual Violence Program became fully staffed things moved pretty quickly. My co-facilitator and I delivered the first 2 multi-modal workshops in March at Gateway Early Education High School. Since then we have delivered a total of 11 multi-modal workshops to a wide variety of populations including the Hispanic community, juvenile detention and a group home for at risk, troubled boys. In addition we have developed ongoing relationships with Carl Hayden High School, North High School and a juvenile detention center.

Along the way we have made some interesting observations. We noticed that some of our youth participants became frustrated and tired when completing the pre/post tests. Some of our participants had difficulty in understanding the questions on the tests and if the participant's primary language was Spanish then the test was even more difficult. We noticed that when staff or teachers were involved in the delivery of the curriculum the participants were more responsive and engaged in learning the material.

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http://www.azrapeprevention.org/agency_updates/2008/EMPACT1_July_08.pdf

When accessible, we utilized bilingual teachers or staff to assist participants in completing the tests. At times it was difficult to secure seat time, due our multi-session format. However, we have been flexible with our curriculum by adapting it to fit any amount of time given to us for a workshop. We have developed a pre/post test for single session workshops, after we determined the original survey instruments were too time consuming to use with one 90 minute presentation.

Sexual violence can be an intimidating topic. Some people do not think it impacts them. Through the delivery of this program, we have been able to plant the seed in our youth to become activists against sexual violence and to provide them with facts about sexual assault. The past year for EMPACT-SPC's Sexual Violence Prevention Program has been one of growth and development. We are truly honored to be a part of this program and have the ability to empower youth to intervene.