

Working with Community: The Importance of Relationships

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Our program, EMPACT-SPC's Trauma Healing Services, is in its first year of providing primary prevention services with the Sexual Violence Prevention & Education Program funded through the Arizona Department of Health Services. This has been a great opportunity for our company to expand our already existent prevention services and over the years, we have become very familiar with effective ways to do prevention work within the community. However, as we have worked to develop our primary prevention curriculum and deliver it, we have been surprised by one aspect. We have been surprised by the amount of time needed to plan and implement our program within a community. Our collaborative work with the Hopi Nation provides a case in point.

In May of this year, our program delivered its first Sexual Violence Prevention training to the Hopi Nation. Although the nation approached us to do the training, we still needed multiple meetings with various community stakeholders to deliver those trainings. Within this community, it was vital that we develop a relationship prior to providing the training. It was important that we, as outsiders, not approach the community in an authoritarian position. So we teleconferenced, emailed and eventually met with a group of community organizers to discuss the needs and unique cultural aspects of the community. The original amount of time that we had estimated for this task had proven to be a conservative estimate. In the end, we realized that a primary prevention program, in its first year, must dedicate a good portion of that year to foundation and relationship building. We learned our lesson with this experience and the trainings were delivered to the satisfaction of the community. The time spent in discussions with the community enabled us to provide culturally sensitive training and meet the needs of our audience effectively.

So we adjusted our timelines and learned an important lesson about the benefit of nurturing community relationships in primary prevention. And as we plan future trainings we are utilizing the lessons we learned. We also came away from this training with new knowledge about the Hopi Nation's rich traditions and wonderful community. We look forward to exploring the many cultures of Arizona and working with those communities to prevent sexual violence.