

Memorandum 12-177 Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention: The Green Dot Strategy

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CITY OF HOMER

CITY HALL

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To: Mayor Wythe and City Council

From: Katie Koester, Community and Economic Development Coordinator

Date: November 19, 2012

Subject: Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention: The Green Dot Strategy

On Friday November 16th a select group of community members representing diverse organizations met with Green Dot staff and the State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault staff to discuss an innovative approach to reducing acts of violence through increasing bystander intervention, the Green Dot Strategy. Due to scheduling conflicts, Mayor Wythe was unable to attend and asked that I attend on her behalf and report to Council. Sargent Larry Kuhns from the Homer Police Department was also in attendance.

What is Green Dot?

Green Dot is a strategy that is being implemented in communities across the globe that recognizes bystanders can be important agents in preventing violent acts. It is based on changing the conversation about sexual assault and domestic violence. Historically the movement always talked about victims and perpetrators. The primary message to men was don't rape and don't beat. Women got the message don't walk alone, etc. But the numbers were not coming down.

The line of work is known for its gender divide. Domestic violence and sexual assault are considered women's issues. Men and boys feel alienated. Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence impacts everyone in a community yet it is still an issue so few people publicly align with. That is because the only message being put out is don'ts. Need to get the message in the main stream, need accessible ways for people to step into preventing. There needs to be a culture change.

Violence is a red dot on a map - a bunch of individual choices. So the solution is a green dot, a single moment where someone uses their words and voice to make the red dot less likely. When green dots are more than red dots, numbers come down. The Green Dot Strategy does not require an individual to be a hero, they don't have to have a bunch of personal growth, they just have to do a couple of things in their existing life.

How to make a green dot realistic? Legitimize personal obstacles. It is not just high school kids that have obstacles, everyone faces obstacles. Maybe someone is shy, influenced by peer pressure; doesn't know what to do, is fighting family norms of violence, etc. Assume whatever obstacles an individual comes in the room with, they leave with. Instead of telling someone to not be shy, say what can a shy person do in this situation? It is about options. Green Dot teaches the three Ds.

- 1)Direct. Some people may feel comfortable going at a situation head on. Directly addressing inappropriate behavior.
- 2)Delegate. Get someone else to do it. Call law enforcement, get your best friend to intervene, report anonymously, get a few friends together.
- 3)Distract. Sometimes the best is to diffuse or redirect a situation so that in that moment tension goes down.

What does green dot look like in a community?

Green Dot is creating a menu where communities can pick and choose different elements to add to what a community is doing. Green Dot is meant to be complementary to other organizations, not supplant them.

- 1- Intro talk that will inspire hope in a community, introduce the basic map and then introduce obstacles, etc. People would come to the talk could walk out and actually do something. Just that can create change in folks.

Target audience is anyone

2- More intensive training. The Green Dot Strategy is based on Diffusion of innovations research. The idea that within any given community there are certain early adopters that carry the most influence. The extended training targets those influential people. Get key folks to model green dots, the rest will follow. They will train more effectively than trainers ever will. If the only people modeling are the expected people, they don't carry the social influence. When you are establishing a new brand, if you have the wrong people the new initiative is dead before it starts. The key is to make sure first line of visibility is the people with social credibility within subgroups. Train them to recognize high risk behaviors. Long before an assault, there are tons of warning signs. Teach the cues to recognizing red dots and potential red dots. Teach how to deal with the obstacles. Training incorporates facilitated activities such as roll play to practice a green dot. Makes people feel comfortable doing the right thing. Blanketing the whole community is not the most efficient or effective way to change a culture.

3- In the Schools. Teaching risk reduction is good, but by high school or college it is too late. By then students think they are invincible and distancing themselves from authority. Instead of teaching kids don'ts, teach them to keep an eye on your friend and make sure they are not an idiot. Work with what is happening developmentally. Teach in middle school.

Green Dot has developed 4 day training model. They suggest is that if a community is interested in Green Dot they send an individual to a training in Kentucky so they can see how it will work for their community. (4 day training is \$900 plus travel/room and board).

Onsite training:

For implementation of Green Dot, the best strategy is to bring trainers to your community to "train the trainers." (Cost: \$10,000 plus travel and materials. There are also ongoing implementation costs that can be tailored to a community's budget.)

Green Dot in Alaska

The Vision is to create trainers in Alaska. The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is working on customizing the program to Alaska and developing a sustainable program with local trainers. Right now they are looking at working with two communities in Alaska to be Green Dot pilot projects. The State has not yet chosen who those communities will be.

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