



**A Community Needs Assessment  
for York County, Maine**

**Conducted by  
Caring Unlimited  
and  
Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine  
2022- 2023**

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## **Summary**

In the fall of 2021, Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine were awarded a Consolidated Youth grant from the U.S Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women. This project was supported by Grant No. 1 5JOVW-21-GG-00641 -CY awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. The goal of this project is to enhance and expand violence prevention services for youth experiencing or at risk of experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking in York County, Maine.

The purpose of this Strengths and Needs Assessment is to assess and report on the current understanding of domestic and dating violence and sexual assault across youth-serving agencies in York County, Maine through the distribution of surveys and capacity measurement tools.

Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine collected data to assess: 1) perceptions of dating violence and sexual assault; 2) community services and resource availability and readiness to serve youth and; 3) relevant demographic data. The objective is to identify strengths, needs and gaps in community service provision and resources to help communities to better leverage resources to achieve desired outcomes.

Survey results will be shared with grant project partners and other stakeholders to identify specific needs, inform future collaboration and education efforts, and increase knowledge of other stakeholders' work. It will show the need to convene a coordinated community response team with grant partners to strategically plan community education and direct services. The goal is to share this needs assessment with prevention educators, grant partners, youth serving organizations, coordinated community response teams and the greater community of York County, Maine. This will be done through email, social media, print copies, and publication on Caring Unlimited's Website ([www.caring-unlimited.org](http://www.caring-unlimited.org)).

Caring Unlimited convened a team of both Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services education staff. The assessment team decided to utilize two surveys to gather information for the needs assessment. Surveys were distributed and completed by participants in the community.

As outlined in the Results section in this needs assessment, youth serving organizations and other community members working with youth identified areas for improvement including program collaboration, prevention education, and victim/survivor services.

Based on the results of the surveys we have outlined a multi-faceted approach to achieving project goals. We recommend convening a youth service coordinated community response team in York County, including a youth advisory board. We will also increase education, awareness and access for youth experiencing teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence and increase education for youth-serving adults about teen dating abuse and sexual violence. Target audiences for this youth-focused adult education include but are not limited to: educators, school resource officers, school nurses, and faith-based organizations. The ultimate goal is to coordinate education services with other youth serving organizations, to maximize efficiency and ability to reach young people with consistent messaging.

### **History**

In the fall of 2021, Caring Unlimited (CU) and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) were awarded a Consolidated Youth grant from the U.S Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women. This project aims to build capacity and enhance prevention services for youth experiencing or vulnerable for sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking in York County, Maine. Additional partners include Maine Boys to Men and Saltwater Vineyard Church.

The Project will expand York County's existing Coordinated Community Response Team to include youth, change attitudes about domestic, dating, and sexual violence and stalking, encourage healthy behaviors in interpersonal relationships, and ultimately, reduce victimization and perpetration. The goal of this project is to engage new partners in youth violence prevention work to increase capacity to provide prevention services and education throughout York County, Maine. Grant partners will provide coordinated school-based and community-based education as core component of their prevention efforts.

Youth prevention work is critical to reducing incidents of violence experienced by youth and reducing their risk for victimization and perpetration of dating, domestic, and sexual violence into adulthood. Because both lead agencies offer support services for youth who have experienced sexual violence and dating abuse, they have a keen understanding of how important it is to prevent harm before it occurs. Strategies must include ways to change attitudes, beliefs, and community structures that allow power and control and violence in relationships to persist. Capacity to conduct comprehensive prevention programming in our community is extremely inadequate due to factors such as staff turnover, limited history of partner collaboration and inadequate funding to establish and sustain a presence in all area schools.

The Project will serve York County, Maine. York County, with a population of 202,343, is Maine's southernmost region and second most populous county. It is comprised of twenty-nine municipalities, two that have populations that exceed 20,000. Most recent census data indicates that 57% of residents live in a rural area and that about 5% of York County's population is non-white. Racial diversity in Maine includes the presence of immigrants from many countries, with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Caring Unlimited and SARSSM routinely work with people of diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and are committed to offering inclusive services and prevention education.

Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine are the largest violence prevention and intervention programs serving York County. Together, the agencies have neither the capacity nor the funding necessary to meet the needs of our community. In fact, we continue to have budget cuts, while experiencing an increase in demand for support from school partners who are desperate for prevention education services, and do not have the expertise to offer it themselves. With our two organizations working separately in our defined areas, we are prone to inefficiencies and a potential duplication of services that could be avoided with a more collaborative, coordinated effort. And while we have multiple systems partners and contacts within youth serving organizations, we lack relationships and direct access to youth and families, two critical audiences for effective prevention and intervention efforts.

### **Chronology of Events**

The primary grant partners from CU and SARSSM started meeting in February 2021. The project: *Enhancing Violence Prevention in York County, Maine*, was established to conduct the community needs assessment. This group met weekly to consult on the needs assessment with additional consultation meetings as needed throughout the rollout of the assessment.

The group chose to use the General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention tool created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The group identified the service providers and programs to complete the assessment tool, including formal grant partners, and began distribution of this assessment tool in the spring of 2022. This work continued through June, 2022.

Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services created an additional survey; *Teen Dating Abuse Sexual Violence Community Survey*, to gather more information from a broader range of youth-serving agencies and service providers relative to their knowledge of the issue of teen dating abuse, sexual violence, and awareness of local victim service organizations. This survey was approved by Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) in August, 2022. It was then distributed to project partners and community that work directly with youth.

In September 2022 the assessment team received and analyzed all of the surveys, and developed recommendations based on the results.

### **Method and Results**

This Strengths and Needs Assessment is designed to inform the development of services for the grant activities. To measure knowledge, perceptions of, and attitudes about teen dating abuse and sexual violence Caring Unlimited and SARSSM distributed assessment tools to a range of youth-serving agencies and community stakeholders in York County, Maine. These tools were designed to gather key information about: 1) perceptions of dating violence and sexual assault; 2) community services and resource availability and readiness to serve youth and; 3) relevant demographic data. The goal is to identify both strengths and needs in community services, and identify resources to help communities better leverage resources to achieve desired outcomes.

Survey results will be shared with grant project partners and other stakeholders to inform future collaboration and education efforts. Results will increase knowledge of other stakeholders' work, aid grant partners in efforts to strategically plan community education and direct prevention and education services for youth, and indicate the need to convene a youth-focused coordinated community response team.

Two surveys were used to collect data for the Strengths and Needs Assessment: *General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention* and the *Teen Dating Abuse Sexual Violence Community Survey*. The purpose of the first is to measure partner organizations readiness to work with youth experiencing dating and sexual violence. The purpose of the second is to get a baseline of community knowledge on the prevalence of the issue and resources available to youth experiencing domestic and dating abuse and sexual violence.

The majority of respondents who completed the General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention survey indicated their organization was strong in leadership, staffing and resources, skills and expertise, and collaboration. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated data and evaluation is a challenge.

#### **General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention**

This assessment is organized into five overarching domains: leadership, staffing, skills, collaboration, and data. These five sections are key areas necessary for organizations to implement, evaluate, and sustain violence prevention strategies.

This tool was chosen because it would indicate how organizations in York County would evaluate themselves on preparedness to work with youth experiencing teen Dating Abuse and sexual violence.

Cumulatively, the results allowed CU and SARSSM to assess overall readiness of youth-serving organizations to engage in violence prevention efforts.

The General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention was distributed to specific youth serving organizations already engaged in prevention education in York County. The following list indicates the organization from which a response was received, the role or title of the respondent(s), and number of responses received:

1. Caring Unlimited, York County's Domestic Violence Resource Center: *Educator/ Advocate* (1)
2. Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine: *Advocate* (1)
3. Child Advocacy Center of York County: *Program Director* (1)
4. Maine Boys to Men, a Portland, Maine-based non-profit organization committed to ending male violence and self-harm while advancing gender equity: *Educator* (1)
5. Salt Water Vineyard Church, a faith-based organization in York County that works with youth through church programs: *Volunteer Youth Advocate* (1)

#### Capacity Assessment Tool Results

5 total surveys

##### Leadership

- 1: 100%
- 4: 80%

##### Staffing & Resources

- 2: 100%
- 3: 80%

##### Skills & Expertise

- 2: 100%
- 3: 80%

##### Collaboration & Partnerships

- 1: 100%
- 3: 80%
- 1: 60%

##### Data & Evaluation

- 4: 80%
- 1: 60%

The results from the Capacity Assessment Report demonstrate a shared confidence among local prevention agencies in their organization's capacity to implement violence prevention interventions. With each organization scoring at or above 60% in the categories of leadership, staffing and resources, skills and expertise, collaboration and partnerships, and data and evaluation, it is clear that there are many strengths benefitting the existing prevention programs of each agency. However, the report also indicates areas of lower capacity and in need of improvement. Three organizations scored 80% and one organization scored 60% in the domain of collaboration and partnerships. Many reported not having a

community plan for violence prevention that guides the work of multiple organizations, and lacking partnerships with diverse populations and those not usually involved in violence prevention.

#### Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey

The Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey was created in partnership with SARSSM and designed to gather information about attitudes and beliefs around teen dating abuse and sexual violence in York County, gauge how much the community knows about resources for youth experiencing abuse, and solicit recommendations from the community on future violence prevention efforts.

The Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey was sent to youth-serving community members in York County. The following list indicates the organization from which a response was received, the role or title of the respondent(s), and number of responses received:

1. Caring Unlimited: *Educator/ Advocate* (1)
2. Apex Youth Connections: *Staff person* (1)
3. Kennebunk High School: *Health Teacher* (1)
4. McArthur Library, Biddeford, Maine: *Librarian* (1)
5. Maine Boys to Men: *Educator* (1)
6. Sanford Middle School: *Social Worker* (1)
7. Bonny Eagle Middle School: *Health Teacher* (1)
8. Unidentified Respondent (1)

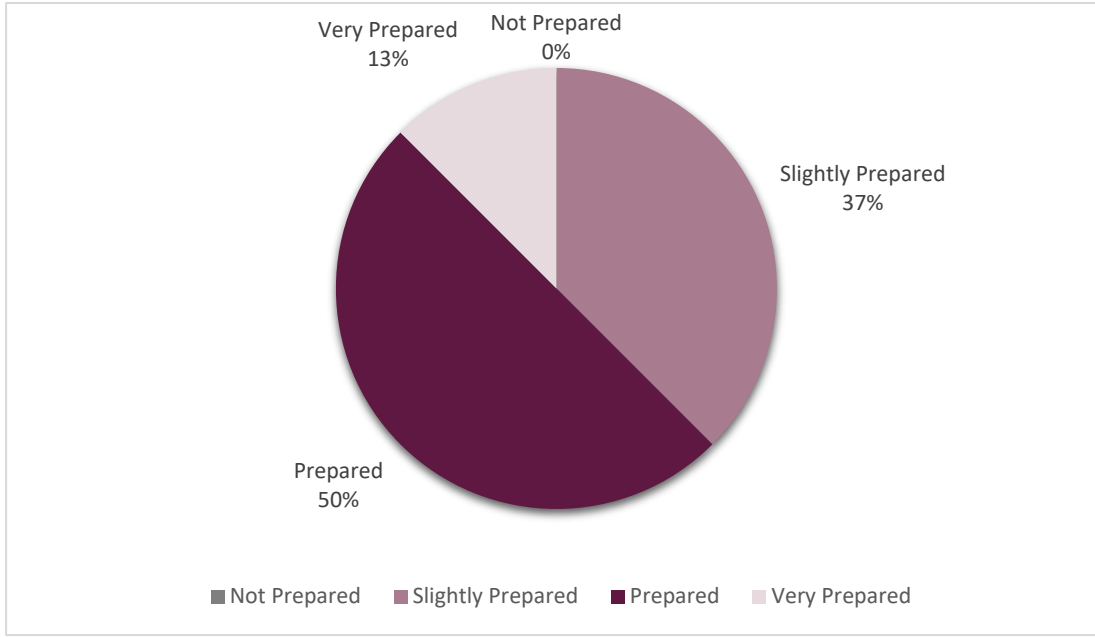
The results from this survey indicate that teen dating abuse and sexual violence are relatively common in our communities and youth-serving adults are confronted with the task of supporting and providing resources for survivors. There is more work to be done to equip adults in York County with the tools to provide support: 37% of respondents indicated they feel only "slightly prepared" to assist a teen experiencing violence, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 (below). Many survey respondents suggested increased education for both youth-serving adults and youth, with an emphasis on consistent messaging. Other suggestions to prevent teen dating abuse and sexual violence included empowering youth to engage in peer education and advocacy, teaching about healthy relationships, presence of role models, and providing resources.



**Figure 1. Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey**

*How prepared do you feel to assist/ intervene with a teen who is experiencing or perpetrating abuse?  
For example: making a report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or referring to local helpline.*

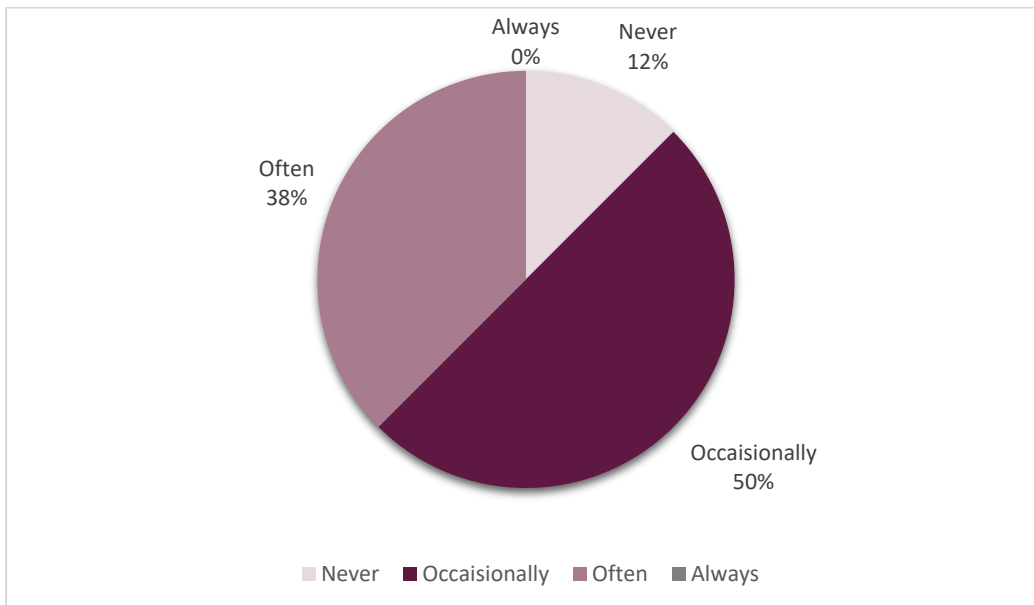
Eight (8) Responses Received/ Reported



**Figure 2. Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey**

*How often do you receive disclosures of, or have suspicions about, teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence from or amongst the teens with whom you work?*

Eight (8) Responses Received/ Reported



Further results indicate:

- A shared confidence among local prevention agencies in their organization's capacity to implement violence prevention interventions.
- Lack of, but a desire for, a community plan for violence prevention that guides the work of multiple organizations.
- A strong desire for coordinated education, programs, consistent messaging and youth empowerment.
- Teen dating abuse and sexual violence are relatively common in our communities.

The data from the two surveys assessed community needs and gaps in youth services to help drive priorities and objectives for the next three years. Findings were consistent with our expectations: youth need more access to dating abuse and sexual assault resource centers and a better understanding of what is available to them, and there is a need and desire for increased teen dating abuse and sexual violence education in schools and with adults. Overall, the youth serving organizations surveyed want to increase collaboration, increase access for youth and provide services to a wider range of youth in York County.

### **Recommendations**

Based on our key findings we have identified three areas of focus: formal coordination of services utilizing a Coordinated Community Response Team model, increasing education and services specific for youth, and increasing education and services for youth-serving adults. We recommend convening a Youth Services Coordinated Community Response Team in York County, including a youth advisory board. We will continue and increase collaboration to develop plans to increase education, awareness and access to services for youth experiencing teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence, and to increase education about teen dating abuse and sexual violence to adults in our community, including, but not limited to, educators, school resource officers, school nurses, and faith-based organizations. Ultimately, we will coordinate education services with other youth serving organizations to maximize efficiency and ability to reach young people with consistent messaging.

### **Addendum**

- The General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention (US CDC)
- Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey

# Capacity Assessment Report

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

## Your Capacity: The Big Picture

The General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention assessed five areas of capacity that your organization might need to implement violence prevention interventions. This graph summarizes the capacity scores for each area.

### Overall Capacity:



Leadership



Collaboration & Partnerships



Staffing & Resources



Data & Evaluation



Skills & Expertise

## How do I interpret my report?

This assessment is organized into five overarching domains: LEADERSHIP, STAFFING, SKILLS, COLLABORATION, and DATA. These five sections are key areas necessary for organizations to implement, evaluate, and sustain violence prevention strategies (see Figure 1).

This report provides the overall score for each capacity area. The score for each capacity area is given as a percentage. For example, the highest possible score on LEADERSHIP is a 5. If your average score was a 3, your organization received a 60% (or 3/5) of the maximum score. If your group got a 4 in this area, you got 80%, and so on. Each section also includes a record of the responses to individual questions within each section.

Note that there is no cutoff number for a “good score” or a “bad score.” Scores are designed to identify areas with relatively high or low capacity. The scores can serve as a tool to start conversations and help prioritize areas to build capacity. You can leverage your organization’s strengths, assets, and opportunities to implement and evaluate your violence prevention efforts.

## How do I use my report?

Once you have reviewed your Capacity Assessment Report, it may be helpful to prioritize capacity areas that you would like to focus on. Additionally, your organization or community may also want to implement capacity-building activities for areas with the lowest scores. It may also help to use this report to guide discussions among leadership and staff at your organizations. There are many important factors to consider as you plan your capacity-building efforts.

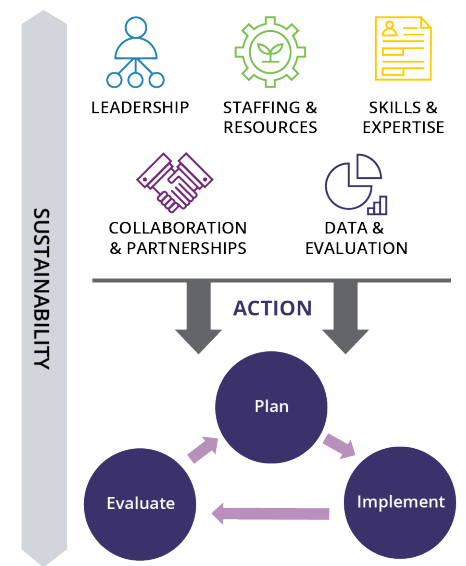


FIGURE 1

- How important is this capacity area to the success of your prevention work? Is it an area that your organization or community values? Will it help enhance your community's ability to implement prevention programming?
- How feasible is it to make changes in each capacity area? For example, are resources available to help build capacity in this area? Can those changes be made on a timeline that will benefit your organization?

## Resources

Below is a link to resources that may help your organization build capacity for your violence prevention efforts. The information provided is not intended to be comprehensive or applicable only to violence prevention. The purpose of providing these resources is to provide you with tools and approaches that may be relevant and appropriate for your work in building capacity to prevent, evaluate, and sustain prevention efforts in your communities.

**Capacity Area Resources:** <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/capacity-assessment-tool/resources>

In addition, a more comprehensive list of resources can be found in the tool Violence Prevention in Practice at <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/violence-prevention-practice/resources/>

## Notes



## Leadership

This domain assesses organizational leadership's commitment and knowledge. Leadership is defined as a person or group of people who have the primary responsibility to be spokespeople and decision-makers. Questions also assess community leaders and their support for violence prevention efforts.

Scores in this area could range from 20% - 100%.

### Overall Section Score:

My organization's leaders are:	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledgeable about violence prevention.					
Committed to preventing violence.					
Able to obtain the necessary financial resources for prevention.					
Strong advocates for violence prevention.					
Motivated to ensure that violence prevention strategies are a success.					
Supportive of staff implementing violence prevention strategies.					
Able to effectively communicate violence prevention messages to stakeholders.					
Able to gain support from elected or appointed officials when needed.					
Able to develop new opportunities for younger persons and newer staff to take on leadership roles.					

My community leaders:	1	2	3	4	5
Exhibit a strong commitment to violence prevention.					
Are strong advocates for violence prevention.					
Share a common vision or plan for violence prevention.					
Understand cultural context and systemic factors that cause and perpetuate violence in their communities.					

### Notes



## Staffing & Resources

This domain assesses general organizational set-up, staffing, and management.

Scores in this area could range from 20% - 100%.

### Overall Section Score:

Staff who work or will work on a violence prevention strategy:	1	2	3	4	5
Are quick to ask for help and help one another when needed.					
Know which activities to implement and how to implement them.					
Collaborate well with other units/staff in my organization to accomplish common goals.					

Resources:	1	2	3	4	5
There are enough staff members at my organization to implement a violence prevention strategy.					
Staff turnover at my organization does not interfere with implementing a violence prevention strategy.					
My organization has the fiscal resources to implement a violence prevention strategy.					
My organization includes violence prevention efforts in the annual budget.					
My organization has multiple funding sources for violence prevention.					
My organization has at least one staff position devoted to violence prevention efforts.					
Staff time allocated to a violence prevention strategy is protected (i.e., staff members would not be pulled away to do other work).					

Sustainability	1	2	3	4	5
There will be or are opportunities for violence prevention to be integrated with other health-related prevention programs.					
My organization is planning for the sustainability of our violence prevention strategies.					
My organization is looking for other funding resources to support violence prevention.					
My organization's violence prevention strategies are likely to be sustained.					
My organization is committed to the long-term goals of the community's violence prevention strategies.					
My organization's violence prevention strategies are part of a collaborative effort with other agencies to prevent violence.					
Violence prevention efforts supported by our community have demonstrated sustainability.					



## Skills & Expertise

This domain assesses staff and leadership knowledge and experience related to violence prevention.

Scores in this area could range from 20% - 100%.

### Overall Section Score:

My organization has staff who:	1	2	3	4	5
Are knowledgeable about violence.					
Are knowledgeable about evidence-based violence prevention programs.					
Have skills in selecting and adapting prevention programs that reflect the needs of the population.					
Are experienced in overseeing community-level prevention efforts.					
Are encouraged to attend training specific to violence prevention.					
Have the necessary skills to support violence prevention at the community level.					
Are knowledgeable about when, why, and how to develop partnerships.					
Have the ability to distinguish between levels of partnerships (i.e., communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration) and identify when each is appropriate in various circumstances.					
Can effectively monitor the implementation and effectiveness of violence prevention programs and strategies.					
Can influence laws and policies related to risk and protective factors for violence.					
Understand the importance of developing and enhancing policy related to violence prevention.					

### Notes



## Collaboration & Partnerships

This domain assesses the type and level of partner relationships and community unity among key stakeholders involved with preventing violence. Community partnerships are important for success. Working together with partners to share ideas and resources can help make violence prevention efforts more effective.

Scores in this area could range from 20% - 100%.

### Overall Section Score:

My organization has staff who:	1	2	3	4	5
Are part of a network of organizations committed to preventing violence.					
Have strong relationships with community leaders.					
Share ideas or information about violence prevention with other organizations and groups.					
Work with community groups in the area with a history of successful collaboration to address violence prevention.					
Have community groups in the area with a history of successful collaboration to address violence prevention.					
Have community groups that may disagree over ideas, but these disagreements do not typically lead to a breakdown in the progress of violence prevention efforts.					
Have a community plan for violence prevention that guides the work of multiple organizations.					
Are part of a community that can accomplish its violence prevention goals.					
Are part of a community where groups do not have turf conflicts about violence prevention efforts.					
Can demonstrate the existence of partnerships with diverse communities and those not usually involved in violence prevention.					
Are part of a community where elected or appointed figures are supportive of violence prevention efforts.					

### Notes





# Data & Evaluation

This domain assesses staff knowledge and understanding of data collection, performance monitoring, and using data to inform organizational decisions and policies. An important part of identifying strategies that fit your community needs and tracking results is having access to local data on violence and the expertise and capacity for program evaluation. Data could include surveillance data, administrative or program data, evaluation results, interviews, and other pieces of available information.

Scores in this area could range from 20% - 100%.

### Overall Section Score:

My organization has staff who:	1	2	3	4	5
Have sufficient data on the needs and resources of the population being served.					
Link our data system with other relevant agencies' data systems.					
Access data about violence outcomes and related risk and protective factors in the community.					
Routinely share data across the public health system.					
Use data to drive decisions about priorities, resources, and staffing.					
Have processes in place to monitor implementation to ensure violence prevention activities are being carried out as they were intended.					
Use data, evaluation results, and feedback to make adjustments when implementation challenges are identified or when intended effects are not obtained.					
Support using staff time to evaluate the effectiveness of violence prevention strategies.					

### Notes

# Teen Dating Abuse and Sexual Violence Community Survey

As part of a grant from the U.S Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, Caring Unlimited and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine are currently gathering data around teen dating abuse and sexual violence in York county. By assessing community needs and gaps in youth services, we are hoping our data collection will help drive priorities and objectives for the next three years. This project aims to build capacity and enhance prevention services for youth experiencing or vulnerable for sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking in York County, Maine.

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\* Required

1. Email \*

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2. Who do you see is most impacted by teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence in your community?

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3. How prevalent is teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence amongst the teens that you work with?

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4. How often do you receive disclosures or have suspicions of teen dating abuse and/or sexual violence amongst the teens that you work with?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Never
- Occasionally
- Often
- Always

5. What resources do you know of that can help respond to or prevent teen dating abuse/sexual violence?

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6. How prepared do you feel to assist/intervene with a teen who is experiencing or perpetrating abuse? For example, making a CPS report or referring to local helplines.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not prepared
- Slightly prepared
- Prepared
- Very prepared

7. What organizations/people should be represented at a Coordinated Community Response to teen dating abuse/sexual violence?

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8. What do you think are the top three things that would help to prevent teen dating abuse and sexual violence in our community?

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9. How can Caring Unlimited and SARSSM be a resource for you?

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