

## At-A-Glance: Gender-Based Violence and SHIP Systemwide Recommendations

### Gender-Based Violence and Social Marketing

The Delaware State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) recommends that, in order to improve the health of the citizens in Delaware, we address the concept of social marketing system-wide (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). The Delaware SHIP describes social marketing as, “the use of commercial marketing strategies to change behaviors for the social good (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). This concept allows policymakers to implement strategies and to change social behaviors and recognize what people believe, need to know, and need to do in order to change their behaviors. Social marketing can be part of a comprehensive approach to preventing disease, improve health, or gain public support for change for the good of individuals or the community (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). Social Marketing can also be applied to address and prevent gender-based violence (GBV).

One clear goal of social marketing approaches is to ensure they are for the “social good”. This requires recognition and understanding of the vast impact that GBV and gender norms have in the United States. In order to make social marketing for health a successful and effective strategy, we must also pay close attention to how narrow constructs of gender are reinforced in our society and how we can avoid contributing to harmful gender norms. These harmful gender norms are community and societal-level risk factors for GBV (Wilkins et al., 2014). The strategies to prevent GBV must work to address changing these norms (Basile et al., 2016). Not only do harmful gender norms increase the risk for GBV, but researchers have documented the detrimental effects of narrowly defined gender norms and gender inequality on the health of men, women, and children (Fleming et al., 2014).

Social marketing is a widely used concept in the public health sector and can be recognized in many marketing strategies. Some examples would be gender stereotypes in association with women and reproductive health or obesity prevention (Greaves, 1996). The strategies that are used to promote and frame these issues are widely known and continue to be an integral part of the ways in which our communities view the public health sector (Fleming et al., 2014).

**Gender-based violence** refers to damaging acts directed at an individual based on their gender identity or their biological sex. It is rooted in gender inequality, the dynamics of power and control, and harmful gender norms.

Gender-based violence includes sexual, physical, psychological and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. Threats of violence, coercion and manipulation are also manifestations of gender-based violence.

Source: Center for the Study and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence, University of Delaware

## Strategies

Public health and social marketing is a tool that can be used in order to incorporate messages to promote and change gender norms. Public health social marketing can critically examine social marketing for gendered messages and commit to incorporating gender-transformative approaches (Fleming et al., 2014). In order to positively affect population health as intended, social marketing efforts must be attentive in their approaches and frame messages that are careful not to contribute to risk for other health concerns we are working to address. Importantly, social marketing efforts that seek to leverage dominant gender norms to reach their targeted audience require careful consideration so as not to exploit or promote the adoption of harmful gender norms that help fuel gender inequity (WHO, 2010). To avoid such unintended consequences, social marketing for health improvement can incorporate gender-transformative frames in messaging to promote gender and health equity (Fleming et al. 2014).

A gender transformative approach to social marketing “strives to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalance of power as a means of reaching health as well as gender equity objectives” (Rottach et al., 2009). Rather than rely on adherence to harmful gender norms such as rigid forms of masculinity and femininity in their materials, social marketing efforts can support their audience in actively recognizing, challenging, and reconfiguring gender norms. Since narrowly defined gender norms are a risk factor for multiple forms of violence and have been shown to inhibit health-seeking behaviors among men, the benefits of gender-transformative social marketing approaches could extend even beyond the stated program’s goals and have health benefits across multiple health areas (Wilkins et al., 2014; Rottach et al., 2009) In order to improve overall health in the State of Delaware, it is important to pay close attention to the ways in which gender is communicated so we can create an inclusive environment that results in both health and equity.



### Call to action

Delaware SHIP stakeholders are working collaboratively to implement social marketing approaches as part of their health interventions (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). Working cross-sectorally with partners to ensure that harmful norms are not perpetuated in our state health improvement efforts is key to preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender and health equity. To learn more about the emerging literature on this topic, help analyze campaigns for gender messages, and learn how to adopt gender-transformative social marketing approaches, please consider contacting [The Center for the Prevention & Study of Gender-Based Violence at the University of Delaware](#). For examples of social marketing efforts locally that have been designed to prevent gender-based violence, contact the [Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#).



Gender norms can change as we age, over time within a society, and from culture to culture.

Source: ACT for Youth Center for Excellence

## References

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