



Community Readiness Assessment

Kenai, Alaska

Prepared by The LeeShore Center and Strategic Prevention Solutions, Inc.

Community Readiness Assessment: Kenai, Alaska

In Spring 2018, The LeeShore Center (The LeeShore) in Kenai, Alaska conducted a Community Readiness Assessment to assess key factors influencing the community's preparedness to address Sexual Assault (SA), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and Teen Dating Violence (TDV). The LeeShore staff interviewed 8 members of the Kenai community. These interviewees represented a range of professional, organizational, and social entities including: Law Enforcement, Faith-based community, Education, Health, Business, and Government (tribal). Interview responses were scored by two independent scorers utilizing standardized scoring criteria.

Assessing Readiness

Dimensions of readiness are key factors that influence a community's preparedness to take action on the issues of SA, IPV, and TDV. The following dimensions formed the basis of inquiry for the assessment.

A. Community Efforts: To what extent are there efforts, programs, and policies that address SA, IPV, and/or TDV prevention?

B. Community Knowledge of the Efforts: To what extent do community members know about local efforts and their effectiveness, and are the efforts accessible to all segments of the community?

C. Community Climate: What is the community's prevailing attitude toward these issues and early detection and prevention?

D. Community Knowledge: To what extent do community members know about or have access to information and its existence or impact in the community?

E. Resources: To what extent are local resources - people, time, money, space, etc. - available to support prevention efforts?

F. Leadership: To what extent are appointed/elected leaders and influential community members (non-elected/appointed) supportive of SA, IPV, and TDV prevention?

The community's score with respect to each of the dimensions forms the baseline foundation of the overall level of community readiness.

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Categorical Description of Overall Scores

Table 1: Stages of Readiness

Score	Readiness Stage	Description of Readiness Level
1	No Awareness	Issue is not generally recognized by the community or leaders as a problem (or it may not be an issue).
2	Denial/Resistance	At least some community members recognize that it is a concern, but there is little recognition that it might be occurring locally.
3	Vague Awareness	Most feel that there is a local concern, but there is no immediate motivation to do anything about it.
4	Preplanning	There is clear recognition that something must be done, and there may even be a group addressing it. However, efforts are not focused or detailed.
5	Preparation	Active leaders begin planning in earnest. Community offers modest support of efforts.
6	Initiation	Enough information is available to justify efforts. Activities are underway.
7	Stabilization	Activities are supported by administrators or community decision makers. Staff are trained and experienced.
8	Confirmation/Expansion	Efforts are in place. Community members feel comfortable using services, and they support expansions. Local data are regularly obtained.
9	High Level of Ownership	Detailed and sophisticated knowledge exists about prevalence, causes, and consequences. Effective evaluation guides new directions. Model is applied to other issues.

Results:

Overall Score: 2.6 (Denial/Resistance Stage)

At least some community members in Kenai recognize that SA, IPV, and TDV is a concern, but there is little recognition that it might be occurring locally.

Table 2: Scores by Dimension of Readiness:

Community Readiness Dimension	SA, IPV, TDV
Community Efforts	2.5
Community Knowledge of Efforts	2.2
Community Climate	2.4
Community Knowledge of the Issue	3.0
Resources	2.8

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Leadership	2.6
Overall Community Readiness Score	2.6

Summary: Kenai reflected a higher score in the area of Community Knowledge of the Issue, indicating that at least some community members have heard of SA, IPV, and TDV. Among some community members in Kenai, there are some *misconceptions* about SA, IPV, and TDV. Additionally, some members of the community are at least *somewhat aware* that these issues are occurring locally.

The overall community readiness score of 2.6 puts Kenai in the **Denial/Resistance** stage of readiness, showing that leadership and community members in Kenai believe the issue is not a primary concern, and, in some cases, don't think it can or should be addressed. Community members also have misperceptions or misinformation about efforts that are currently taking place, such as efforts being undertaken by The LeeShore Center. Community members and certain levels of leadership don't always support using available resources to address SA, IPV, or TDV in Kenai.

A. Existing Community Efforts: 2.5

A number of respondents in Kenai recognized the LeeShore Center as a prominent organization working to address power-based violence in the community, though many were unsure of specific efforts, especially in terms of work being undertaken to prevent power-based violence. Some noted the perceived reactionary nature of those efforts:

Well I know that LeeShore is a resource, it's kind of like post, after it's happened. As far as prevention, I can't say that I know of any.

Respondents also mentioned several social services organizations, in addition to certain sectors of the faith community as taking on efforts to address these issues in Kenai:

I know of Love Inc., The LeeShore, there's some faith-based opportunities and desires to prevent and help with this type of lifestyle. Unfortunately, we don't have other programs. We have lots of efforts- there's a lot of communication about what needs to be done.

When asked about the accessibility of programs in Kenai, respondents conveyed a sense that programs and efforts do seem inaccessible, and that most of the inaccessibility stems from the community at large being unaware of those programs and efforts. One interviewee explains:

I think it's kind of an obscure element of assistance, like you really have to dig to find out what's out there and how to get that help. And so I don't think many of us really know where to send people or what to do once we're approached, and we find out there is a need [and] we start scrambling really to find out what to do or where to send them.

Next steps are to enhance community members' knowledge of the issue by creating an on-line and physical media campaign. We will be developing a website specific to increasing the community's awareness level of how power-based violence is impacting our community, current prevention efforts, and available resources. We will also be creating a Facebook page to engage individuals and provide them with ideas and information that they can post on their Facebook pages and/or other media outlets. Part of that media campaign will include stories of local people who have been affected by this issue in this community and find creative ways to disseminate these. It is imperative that we begin building capacity within or community to address this very important issue.

B. Community Knowledge About Efforts: 2.2

Respondents rated community knowledge of efforts as being low, with some interviewees speculating that the average citizen could probably not name any efforts currently taking place in Kenai to address and prevent power-based violence. One respondent stated:

I don't think the average community member thinks about it being an issue unless you go up to someone and asked them what they think about this. I honestly think most people on the street- ask them that question [and] they would just kind of look at you and go, "what?"

Not surprisingly, respondents reported that the reason many community members are not aware of efforts is largely due to the community being unaware of the issue of power-based violence generally. One interviewee juxtaposed the awareness of power-based violence issues with that of the highly successful breast cancer awareness campaigns, and pointed to the disconnect many people have with power-based violence as a health issue:

...they're not aware of the efforts because they're not aware of the problem. And so with all of us trying to get it going it's almost like I would connect it with when the breast cancer awareness was first starting- the very first pink ribbons and you know things like

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that that people were, [sic] like "What is the big deal, you know, ok, so it's another cancer." No, no. It is bigger than that...I think that prevention [for power-based violence] [sic] would be so much more accepted because we try to prevent health problems but we don't see this as a health problem.

To increase awareness of the power-based violence primary prevention (Green Dot) efforts currently being launched in our community, we will be posting upcoming events throughout multiple venues, website, Facebook, local newspapers, radio, and mail outs. We will also be connecting with other local entities to have Green Dot events put in their newsletters and calendars. We will continue to attend local community events and offer additional individual overviews or trainings to community resource agencies, local business, churches and groups to enhance the community's knowledge of current efforts.

C. Community Climate: 2.4

Respondents in Kenai reported the community's attitude toward preventing power-based violence to be relatively unconcerned. As one interviewee plainly stated:

Folks don't want to acknowledge that the problem exists.

When asked if there were any circumstances in which community members in the Kenai/Soldotna area would tolerate power-based violence, some respondents conveyed that there were. One interviewee explained:

I'm afraid I can think of circumstances in which people [sic] are of the opinion that that's ok to have your opinion, and it's ok to push your opinion, and if a person can't handle it then it's their problem and not yours. They don't have that respect for other people who may not be strong enough in many ways, especially socially, to stand up for themselves. And they think that's their problem and [sic] it's the weaker person, or the person that doesn't have the skills to handle their forcefulness- that's their fault or that they asked for it.

This corresponds with our previously listed awareness plans, and demonstrates the need to add a stigma busting component to that awareness. Sharing stories from survivors as well as addressing the fear, humiliation, gas-lighting, and other dynamics of power-based violence will be essential in creating a community that understands the issue and feels empowered to enact change.

D. Community Knowledge of the Issue: 3.0

Respondents reported the community as having a vague sense of awareness of power-based violence in Kenai, or that they may have heard of the issue, but little else. One interviewee offered an explanation, reporting that people are unlikely to get involved personally with issues related to power-based violence, and therefore are less likely to be curious about the issue as a whole:

...most people choose not to get involved with domestic violence issues because it's someone else's problem, such as the State Troopers or the police, and we'll let the government handle it. And then it's the idea of "I don't want to know." And so we don't make inquiry where we think we should. We see someone who may be a little aggressive in the stores and then we say, "Well we don't know exactly what was going on," or [sic] we dismiss it and it seems easier to dismiss it and close our eyes to it than it is to approach it aggressively.

When asked about a time they have heard someone in the community talk about power-based violence, one respondent reported that they had, and what stood out was the sense of those involved not knowing what action to take or where to seek help:

What stood out in my mind is that they spoke about it in a way that there wasn't going to be support. There wasn't going to be any- what do you do? It just [was] all about getting children out of there, which you know is ok, but they talked about what to do after but never about getting that person help, and never about what to do to prepare the rest of the family to deal with it.

Some respondents were unsure about where to access local data on the issue of power-based violence. While interviewees mentioned that they knew, in general terms, that data exists, some were unsure of where to access it. One respondent explains:

I don't know of any. I mean there is domestic violence rates, and sexual assault rates, but as far as the wider net of power-based violence, I don't know.

The website will include access to local prevention efforts and organizations as well as include data such as the local assessments regarding the opioid epidemic, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) that is done in the schools, local Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACES) data, and the 2013 local and 2015 statewide data from the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) Victimization Surveys. As new research becomes available it will be added to the resources. Many times when statistics are provided for the nation or the state it gives a sense of it happening elsewhere, and it is important to have local data available highlighting that this issue affects our community and community members at unacceptable rates as well.

E. Resources: 2.8

Respondents reported the level of support within the community for efforts to prevent power-based violence including volunteer time, allocating or donating financial resources, and willingness to provide space, among others, to be relatively low community-wide. Some interviewees mentioned counseling services, the LeeShore Center, social services programs, and government entities as resources, but conveyed that more should be done to increase the amount of resources available to community members. One respondent stated:

...there are some counseling programs out there, but the counseling programs that are government-based, or financed in some way or another, are limited because other restrictions are placed upon the counselors. The limited resources that are provided for them I think restrict the rest of the community. We can do better in this area, but we all have to have an active voice and we need to work together as a community.

When asked about the level of support in the community for efforts to address and prevent power-based violence, respondents mentioned fundraisers for the LeeShore Center, along with a few outlets for volunteers. One community member remarked:

I don't know. I think that there are [resources], I do see [sic] many fundraisers for, like, LeeShore Center. I myself have participated in runs to help raise money for help to, I don't know if I want to say prevent, [but] help prevent the power-based violence. I think Soldotna in itself does help financially [some] volunteer outlets like that.

We know that we need to begin building capacity within our community to address primary prevention of power-based violence by continuing to invite additional stakeholders and community members to be a part of the Peninsula Points on Prevention Coalition. This will provide us access to additional resources and support. For those that may not want to participate in the coalition we will provide them with other ways or options in which they can support the efforts.

F. Leadership: 2.6

When asked who the leaders are in the community in terms of preventing power-based violence, many respondents were unsure, or named specific individuals in the community. Others reported The LeeShore Center and the faith-based community, among others, as being leaders. One interview explained their perceptions of who the community leaders are:

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Other than the LeeShore Center, I would say that many of the therapists have been working on it. Many of the churches are really working hard. I know at our church we've been trying to get the word out- trying to communicate the best we can. I would say other than that the school system in its way with trying to get awareness from the little [students] all the way up, especially at the high school level. We've been working on attempting to get an open conversation, but other than that- doctors' offices I've noticed have been asking if [people] feel safe.

Some respondents reported that for the community to take authentic ownership for challenging social norms that allow sexual violence to occur in Kenai/Soldotna, aligning with diverse sectors of community partners would yield the best results. One respondent said the following when asked who they would want to participate with in the effort to change social norms in the community:

I would want the political leaders of the community. Specifically, I would want the borough mayor. I would want the Kenai mayor. I would want the city councils. I would want all of them. Someone from each of those. I would want the school district on board. I would want someone from the board of education. I would want people from the police force...I think it would be really good to get with, say even the college and places where sometimes these things happen [and] people can feel very alone.

We will pursue one-on-one visits with community leaders and members to increase their knowledge of the level of the issue and the impact that power-based violence has on our community's health systems, drug/alcohol addiction services, and prison systems. Although presentations have been conducted at the Borough level to attempt to engage the assembly members and borough mayor, we will continue to conduct outreach to the City Assemblies and Mayors, faith leaders, school board members and any others mentioned by the interviewees.

Conclusions and Next Steps

We need to think critically about the results from Kenai's Community Readiness Assessment and to determine possible next steps for The LeeShore Center. Our organization will need to interpret the findings and prioritize action steps. Potential recipients for sharing results include:

- The LeeShore Center (staff/Board Members)
- Kenai Public Health

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- Kenaitze Indian Tribe
- Peninsula Points on Prevention Coalition
- Change 4 Kenai Coalition
- Re-entry Coalition
- Peninsula Community Health Services
- Interview Participants

Although the assessment provided a score of 2.6 (finding the Kenai/Soldotna at the level of denial/resistance for preventing power-based violence), it also provided our community with valuable information about what work needs to be done.

It is critical to start with increasing the level of awareness about power-based violence and its long term implications. It is important for community members to understand that unless change is introduced, these patterns of violence are passed from one generation to the next thus creating societies that allow unacceptable rates of violence. In order to accomplish this it is imperative that multiple avenues are used to reach as many community members as possible utilizing web-based outreach, presenting to a variety of community groups, service agencies, business owners, and conducting one on one meetings with community leaders.

The assessment also found that there is a need to help our community understand the dynamics of domestic violence and the stigma's associated with it. By sharing stories from survivors this takes it from being a statistic to a real person, enabling those that have never been directly affected by power-based violence to gain perspective.

It is imperative that we begin building capacity within our community to address this issue through education and raising awareness of power-based violence and how it intersects with many of the issues faced by our community. Understanding shared risk and protective factors of violence in our community are the important first steps in developing strategies, activities, and resources to effectively prevent multiple forms of violence.

APPENDICES

Appendices

Table 1: Stages of Readiness

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