

Operation Lighthouse: See the signs be the change

A Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program in the Macon Community

Eliza Guta

Mercer University

Project Summary

The purpose of this project is to design a teen dating violence prevention program (*Operation Lighthouse*), implement it in a local afterschool program, and assess change in students' understanding and attitude towards dating violence.

Target Community

The target community for *Operation Lighthouse* is middle and high school aged children that participate in local afterschool programs in Macon-Bibb county. There are three organizations that I am attempting to partner with, Campus Clubs, Men About Change and Street to Success (Appendix D). Campus Clubs is an afterschool organization in Macon that tutors children between the ages of five and 18. The purpose of the organization is to provide additional academic help and spiritual enrichment to children from a low socio-economic background. Men About Change is a similar organization aimed at enhancing the lives of young men ages five to 13. Lastly, Street to Success (S2S) tutors students, mainly reaching girls from ages 11 to 17 and boys ages seven to 17. Thus, the target audience of this curriculum is upper middle to lower high school aged boys and girls.

While I am open to the idea of working with multiple afterschool organizations, it appears that S2S will be the most viable option. Consequently, this project proposal outlines the implementation of *Operation Lighthouse* at S2S. Ideally, after pilot testing *Operation Lighthouse* at S2S a club would be created at Mercer to ensure continual implementation of a successful curriculum in local afterschool programs and potentially in schools. This project is sponsored by Crisis Line and Safe House of Central Georgia (CL-SH), which is a non-profit organization that helps victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault (Appendix D), and Jamie Bormann, a legal advocate and former Mercer student at CL-SH, will supervise the overall project implementation.

Additionally, this project is also registered as an Honor's Project in Psychology, and Dr. Sarah Appleby and Dr. Keegan Greenier will supervise the psychological research aspect of my program initiative.

Project Relevance and Rationale

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a pervasive problem throughout the United States and specifically in Georgia. For instance, the Center for Disease Control (2016) found that 21% of girls and 10% of boys in high school have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by a romantic partner in Georgia. Additionally, there is a clear link between teenage dating abuse and later instances of intimate partner abuse, with around 50% of victims of violence beginning a relationship with the person who would eventually kill them between the ages of 13 and 24 (Center for Disease Control, 2016). In Bibb County 14.8% of adults have experienced some form of physical violence in an intimate partner relationship, which is higher than average rate in all Georgia counties (Professional Research Consultants Inc., 2015). Thus, there is a crucial need to reach young students and educate them about this issue before they engage seriously in romantic relationships. Programs target at young adults, such as *Shifting Boundaries* and *Safe Dates*, have empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of initiatives at increasing awareness of and improving attitudes towards teen dating violence (Taylor & Stein, 2015; Foshee et al., 2004). Moreover, Georgia public schools do not currently have a program to address this specific issue in schools. Rather, their emotional and social health initiatives are designed to counter bullying and general disciplinary problems (Georgia Department of Education).

Consequently, *Operation Lighthouse* will focus on four main issues: distinguishing between health and unhealthy relationships, establishing boundaries, bystander training, and dispelling myths about sexual harassment, rape and dating violence. Each of these issues will be

covered using a five-module curriculum, with each module lasting around 45 minutes. *Module 1: Introduction* and *Module 2: Personal Growth* will focus on building rapport with the students and introducing them to the topic of dating violence. Prior to this session, pre-surveys will be distributed to assess the students' experience with TDV. *Module 2: General Relationships* will highlight the characteristics of abusive relationships, help students formulate their own boundaries, communicate those boundaries to others, and introduce the idea of consent. *Module 3: Bystander Training* will focus on how every person in a community can be a part of the conversation to end violence and become an ally to those experiencing violence. For girls, this module will focus on disclosure for violence, how to react if a friend comes to them about an abusive relationship or how to approach a friend if they think the relationship is abusive. For boys, this module will address the often-neglected topic of how boys can stop other boys from perpetrating violence and that violence against men is an unfortunate reality. Lastly, *Module 4: Myths* will address common misunderstandings surrounding the topics of sexual harassment, rape and dating violence. The last session will be used to address any additional questions, comments or concerns about the issues discussed during the program and to distribute post surveys.

While many of the current prevention programs employ a lecture, worksheet based initiative, our curriculum will incorporate interactive activities that encourage the students to share their perspectives and move around the classroom. A more detailed outline of this curriculum can be found in a separate document. This would be a continued initiative because implementation of this program will hopefully not end with one afterschool organization or be limited to occurring under my leadership. Rather, through CL-SH and Mercer, my plan is to train another set of prevention advocates to continue presenting the curriculum.

Project Objectives

The main goals of the prevention program are...

- Equip students with the skills to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships
 - Addressed in *Module 2* and assessed in questions 5-18 of the survey
- Increase the acceptability of talking about sensitive issues like dating violence and sexual assault with peers
 - Introduced in *Module 1* and continued throughout the program and assessed in question 19 of the survey
- Enable students to respond appropriately to disclosures about violence and provide advice to friends in abusive relationships
 - Addressed in *Module 3* and assessed in questions 20 and 21 of the survey
- Dispel common myths about abuse, sexual assault and rape
 - Addressed in *Module 4* and assessed in questions 12-16 of the survey

The primary way that the accomplishment of these goals will be assessed is through pre/post surveys, adapted from a survey used by Macgowan (1997) (Appendix A). Additionally, the target outcome of this project is presenting the intervention curriculum at S2S. The overall Macon community would benefit from the implementation of this curriculum for two main reasons. Primarily this initiative would benefit the Macon community as TDV is a large problem with around 30% of high school students experiencing violence in romantic relationships illustrating that it is imperative prevention programs reach middle/high school students in the critical age before they engage in serious romantic relationships (Center for Disease Control, 2016). Thus, if successful our curriculum could be instrumental in the fight against violence in teen relationships and also general domestic violence rates. Secondly, pilot testing the curriculum

in afterschool organizations can provide our program with the necessary empirical evidence to lobby for its use in the public-school system. As stated previously, Georgia schools do not explicitly address issues of dating violence in their health curriculums in middle school illustrating that *Operation Lighthouse* could be the beginning stage in closing the gap in this area of health and safety (Georgia Department of Education).

Implementation Plan

The overall plan for the project is....

1. Create *Operation Lighthouse*
2. Meet with S2S
 - a. Generate interest and potential buy in
 - b. Ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the needs of the students at S2S through interviews with the organization staff
 - c. Coordinate implementation dates and times
3. Implement *Operation Lighthouse* at S2S
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum through survey statistical analysis and feedback from the organization staff
5. Analyze data from programs implementation into an evaluative report on the effectiveness of the curriculum
6. Present the report at a conference

Potential Challenges

One of the biggest challenges with the implementation of this project is going to be keeping the students' attention. By working with an afterschool program, I have more flexibility with time constraints but this means that the students have already been in school for 7-8 hours and

are most likely exhausted from having to focus on material that may not interest them.

Consequently, my curriculum is going to need to use interactive games that get the kids moving and that entertain them in addition to teaching them about TDV.

Another potential problem could be the sensitive nature of this topic. Dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape are all very emotional issues that could elicit a strong response from some students that may have experienced these issues personally or know someone who has. Moreover, while it is important to be direct about the problems teens are facing in today's society it is also important to understand the limitations age place on a students' maturity level. Thus, it will be important to work closely with the afterschool organization's staff to get their advice on issues to address and have them look over our curriculum to ensure it is age appropriate. Furthermore, the intimate nature of this topic will require that the students feel comfortable opening up to the presenters and the other students in the afterschool organization. As a result, it will be important to use ice breakers and team bonding activities to create unity and cohesion among the students in the organization. It may also be useful for the presenting staff to visit the afterschool organization and get to know the students before beginning the program.

The sensitive nature of the topic will also be an important element in applying for IRB approval. Most likely the IRB application will go through full review because I am working with minors on a sensitive issue. Consequently, it might take longer than usual to receive the necessary approval to begin implementing *Operation Lighthouse*. As a result, I have already begun the application process and have adjusted the schedule to account for potential delays. To meet the criteria for approval I will need to consider how I will obtain informed consent and handle the possibility that students will confide experiences of abuse. For informed consent, I will not only need the student's signature but also their parent's approval. This may be difficult

because the teenagers I am trying to work with come from homes with less parental involvement. Consequently, in the memorandum of understanding with the partner organization S2S I have included a statement about the organization helping me obtain parental consent. Additionally, I have considered issuing passive consent forms asking parents to contact S2S if they do not want their child participating in the program, a technique used by other dating violence prevention programs for youths (Macgowan, 1997). Further, research has demonstrated that passive consent might actually be the best way to go about distributing consent forms. Specifically, using active parental consent forms often creates a systematic bias in the selection of at youth for research studies, thus preventing the most at risk children from receiving necessary interventions (Liu et al., 2017).

Moreover, students volunteering to help me present *Operation Lighthouse* will be registered volunteers with CL-SH. Consequently, they will be trained by CL-SH to respond to disclosure of intimate partner abuse and sign documents assuring their commitment to confidentiality. The training will outline guidelines of mandatory reporting (volunteers will have an obligation to report instances of child and elder abuse only) and familiarize volunteers with resources to give students that are victims of intimate partner abuse, such as the Teen Text Line organized through Project Safe.

Additionally, to conduct statistical analysis on the data I collect from the students' surveys I need consistent responses from at least 30 students. However, ensuring that the same 30 students show up for all of the sessions could be difficult. A potential solution to this problem would be giving a card to each student that completes a pre-survey and then with every session they show up to they get a sticker to indicated their attendance. Students that have three or more stickers, in other words students that have attend three out of the four sessions will have their names entered

into a raffle for a prize. This will hopefully encourage attendance to all sessions and keep track of how many sessions students have attended.

Lastly, another constraint is the number of volunteers we will need to present this curriculum. Currently, I have a small team of about four people, including myself, that are willing to sacrifice the necessary time and energy to get this program up and running. However, it may require more than four people to ensure timely and effective implementation of the program. Consequently, I have reached out to a variety of groups, such as Girl Up and 1 in 4 to see if anyone would be interested in joining our initiative. Additionally, I think it will be important to recruit presenters from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds to ensure that we can relate to a variety of different types of students.

For a full outline of resources needed see the proposed budget (Appendix B). These resources will be acquired through QEP and CL-SH funding.

Project Timeline

Activity	Details	Completion Date
<i>Operation Lighthouse</i> Curriculum Outline	A beginning outline of the curriculum to show to CL-SH	November 13, 2017
CL-SH Feedback	Meet with CL-SH team to get their comments and suggestions on the program	November 16, 2017
Scouting	Travel to afterschool programs to get a feel for what the organization does and the students	November 6-17, 2017
<i>Operation Lighthouse</i> Draft	A detailed, completed version of the curriculum to show to afterschool organizations	End of December 2017
Volunteer Recruitment	Narrow down pool of volunteers to a core 4-6 people that can be heavily involved in the implementation of the program	Month of December 2018
IRB	Begin IRB process for research component of implementation	December 2017- January 2018
<i>Operation Lighthouse</i> Practice Presentation	Present the curriculum to CL-SH	January 2018
IRB Draft	Have a draft of the application completed	January 8, 2018

<i>Operation Lighthouse</i> Final	Taking into account the advice of S2S and CL-SH have a final draft of the curriculum	January 20, 2018
IRB Due Date	Submit the final IRB application	January 22, 2018
Scheduling	Confirm plans to run program with S2S	Last week of January 2018
Training	Train the volunteers on how to present the curriculum, respond to disclosure of violence and create the necessary materials for implementation	First week of February 2018
Implementation	Implement <i>Operation Lighthouse</i> at S2S	February- April of 2018
Analysis	Synthesize and process the data from the surveys	May 2018
Reflection	Meet with the volunteer team, CL-SH staff and S2S staff to discuss the strengths and limitations of the program	May 2018

Evaluation and Dissemination

The success of the project will be evaluated through a comparison of pre and post surveys distributed to the students participating in *Operation Lighthouse*. The pre- and post surveys were adapted from surveys used in Macgowan (1997), a study that analyzed the effectiveness of a dating violence prevention program in a predominately African-American middle school which matches the demographics of the students that attend S2S. The survey results from the students receiving the intervention will be compared to a control group of students at a local high school that has a similar socio-economic and racial makeup. The comparison will be conducted using a paired (dependent) *t*-test to ascertain if there was a statistically significant change in the student's responses as a result of program participation. The results of this study will be disseminated through a variety of academic and non-academic forums. For instance, I will apply to present the project at Bear Day 2019 and the Psychology and Law Conference 2019. Lastly, I will give the information I gather through this research project to CL-SH for their future prevention efforts.

References

- After School Program. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from
<http://www.campusclubsmacon.org/programs/after-school-program/>
- Our Program. (2017, April 30). Retrieved October 28, 2017, from
<https://menaboutchange.org/our-program/>
- Foshee, V. A., Bauman, K. E., Ennett, S. T., Linder, G. F., Benefield, T., & Suchindran, C. (2004). Assessing the Long-Term Effects of the Safe Dates Program . *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(4), 619-624.
doi:10.2105/ajph.94.4.619
- Georgia Department of Education. Health Education 6-8. Retrieved November 01, 2017, from
https://www.georgiastandards.org/Standards/Pages/BrowseStandards/HealthEd_6-8.aspx
- Georgia Department of Education. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from
<http://www.gadoe.org/Pages/Home.aspx>
- Macgowan, M. (1997). An Evaluation of a Dating Violence Prevention Program for Middle School Students. *Violence and Victims, 12*(3), 223-235.
- Professional Research Consultants Inc. (2015). *2015 Community Health Needs Assessment* (pp. 6-77, Rep.). Omaha, New England.
- Taylor, B. G., Mumford, E. A., & Stein, N. D. (2015). Effectiveness of “Shifting Boundaries” Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program for Subgroups of Middle School Students. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 56*(2), 20-26.
doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.07.004
- United States of America, Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control. (2016). *Domestic Violence in Georgia*.

Appendix A

Pre/Post Survey

Knowledge about relationship violence

1. Victims of abusive relationships may be male or female
2. Abusive behavior between dating partners usually ends when they get married.
3. A dating partner who always wants to be in charge and make all the decisions might become abusive.
4. If you make up after being abused, it won't happen again.

Attitudes about non-physical relationship violence

5. Slamming a locker door or driving recklessly in a car to scare someone is abusive.
6. If the person you are going out with acts jealous, it shows true love.
7. It is abusive to yell at someone even if you don't hit them.
8. True love is when you are willing to give up everything for the other person.
9. Love is when two people are so crazy about each other that they are constantly texting one another.
10. It is possible to be angry or even argue with your dating partner without being abusive.
11. Dating violence only includes physical abuse.

Attitudes about physical and sexual relationship violence

12. It's okay for a boy to force a girl to have sex with him if she has flirted with him or led him on.
13. Some people enjoy being hit in a relationship, that's why they put up with it.
14. A person is not responsible for what they do when they are drunk or high.
15. Most physical violence in dating occurs because a partner asked for it.

16. If you did something wrong, it is your fault if you get hit.

Attitudes about dealing with violence in relationships

17. When you are upset, it is best to tell the other person how you feel.

18. If you believe you are being abused, or you are abusing someone else, you should talk to an adult who you think will help you.

Disclosure and dating violence

19. I feel comfortable talking about the issue of violence in relationships with others.

20. If a friend told me that they were in an abusive relationship, I would know how to respond.

21. Most people who say they are being abused are lying.

Assessed using a four point Likert scale with 1 indicating that participants strongly agree, 2 indicating participants agree, 3 indicating participants disagree, and 4 indicating that participants strongly disagree.

Appendix B

Proposed Budget

Item	Use	Number	Cost
Mailing labels	Emoji game	1 box of 1,200 labels	\$30
Markers	Body mapping	3 packs of 50	\$20.88
Copies and laminating	Instructions, hand outs	TBD using Mercer Library estimates	~\$50
Gift Cards	Raffle prize (iTunes, Dunkin Donuts)	TBD	~\$75
Notecards	Student tracking	1 pack of 100 cards	\$10.37
Stickers	Student tracking	686 assorted color stickers	\$4.92
Chalk	Body mapping	52 pieces of chalk	\$4.71
Laminating	Instructions, flower power		
Red masking tape	Crossing the line	1 role	\$2.98
Beach balls	Empowerment and support	Pack of 12	\$16.49
Candy	Keep the students engaged	TBD	~\$30
Total			~\$250

Appendix C

Memorandums of Understanding

Street to Success

Our Purpose:

The purpose of this initiative is to educate students of the Macon-Bibb area on the prevalent issue of teen dating violence. *Operation Lighthouse*, a teen dating violence prevention program, consists of five modules composed of a series of lessons on personal growth, general relationships, bystander training and dispelling myths. Each module will take forty-five minutes to complete. Lessons will include discussion-based and interactive components. We will be presenting to the students who participate in the afterschool program that is put on by the organization "Street to Success." We will be educating the girls who participate in the Street to Success program on Tuesday nights and boys on Wednesday nights from 5:30-7:30 P.M. We will attempt to be present and assist during the hour of tutoring that will occur (as a part of the Street to Success organization) prior to presenting our module. In order to assess the progress made and the amount the students learn, pre- and post-module surveys will be given.

What we need from Street to Success:

In order for the most accurate representation of data to be collected, we need students to be involved in the program as consistently as possible. Students should be encouraged to participate in each of the five (5) modules. If at all possible, additional methods of incentivizing participation beyond our own efforts would be ideal. We will also need a space provided to us where we can present our modules. While we are presenting, we will expect the adults to remain present as disciplinary and authority figures. We will also expect that the students' phones

remain collected and out of the student's' possession for the duration of the module.

Additionally, consent forms will be provided for participation in the program and Street to

Success will be responsible for getting these signed and returned.

X

Elliza Guta, *Program Director*

X

R. Clark Myers, *Assoc. Program Director*

X

Partner Organization Representative

Crisis Line and SafeHouse of Central Georgia

Our Purpose:

The purpose of this initiative is to educate students of the Macon-Bibb area on the prevalent issue of teen dating violence. *Operation Lighthouse*, a teen dating violence prevention program, consists of five modules composed of a series of lessons on personal growth, general relationships, bystander training and dispelling myths. Each module will take forty-five minutes to complete. Lessons will include discussion-based and interactive components. We will be presenting to the students who participate in an afterschool tutoring program that is put on by the organization "Street to Success." In order to assess the progress made and the amount the students learn, pre-module and post-module surveys will be given. The curriculum and data collected will be presented at Bear Day in the spring of 2019.

What we need from Crisis Line and SafeHouse:

In order to provide the most effective implementation of *Operation Lighthouse*, we need monetary resources of approximately \$250. Furthermore, the curriculum and project proposal will need to be officially supported by the Crisis Line and SafeHouse through a review, feedback and approval process to occur before the first implementation of the project begins in February of 2018. Lastly, Crisis Line and SafeHouse will provide support services for any disclosure of dating violence by participating students.

X

Elliza Guta, *Program Director*

X

R. Clark Myers, *Assoc. Program Director*

X

Partner Organization Representative