



Illinois State Board of Education

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Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Pat Quinn, Governor
The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Minority Leader

FROM: Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D. *Christopher A. Koch*
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Report

The Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Report is being submitted pursuant to 97-1037.

The task force was created in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a domestic violence awareness and prevention program, "the Step Back Program" at Oak Park River Forest High School and to make recommendations to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly that might help to guide the implementation of domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs at schools throughout the state.

This letter is being transmitted on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Task Force, Representative Camille Lilly and Chris Ptak, Prevention Program Director at Sarah's Inn. For additional copies of this report or for more specific information about any of the items, please contact Chris Ptak at 708-386-3305.

Enclosure

cc: Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center

Illinois Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force
Recommendations and Report

April 1, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
BACKGROUND	2
Task Force Legislation - P.A. 97-1037	3
Process and Deliberations	4
The Project Development Committee.....	4
The Feasibility and Resource Committee.....	4
The Evaluation Committee	4
Educational and Funding Considerations	5
Relevant Educational Mandates.....	5
THE STEP BACK PROGRAM	9
History and Background	9
Overview	9
Logistical Information on Oak Park and River Forest High School.....	10
Duration	10
Mandatory Participation	10
Co-Facilitators and Other Partners.....	10
Sex Segregation	11
Bystander Model.....	11
Step Back Curriculum, Goals, and Objectives.....	12
STEP BACK EVALUATION.....	15
Correlated Evidence.....	15
Evaluation of Program Effectiveness	15
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
Time, Enrollment and Training Commitment	17
Partnership.....	17
Evaluation.....	18
Annual Letter of Participation.....	19
Illinois Youth Survey.....	19
Site Visits/Interviews	19

Assessment of Needs, Program Improvement, and Resource Sharing	20
Funding	20
Statewide Implementation Costs and Scholarship Funds	20
Exhibit A	22
Exhibit B	24
Exhibit C	26
Transcript for the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Hearing held Thursday, November 14th, 2013	

Appointments to the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force, PA 97-1037

Co-Chairs

Representative Camille Lilly

Illinois' 78th District
Appointed by the Speak of the House

Chris Ptak

Prevention Program Director, Sarah's Inn
Appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Nicki Bazer

General Counsel, Illinois State Board of Education
Appointed by the Illinois State Board of Education

Michael Bischof

Regional VP of Mortgage Lending, Guaranteed Rate
Appointed by the Minority Leader of the House

Sean Black

Communications Coordinator,
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Appointed by the Ill. Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Dorothy Brown

Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court
Appointed by the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court

Linda Carlson

Girls' Self-Defense Instructor
Oak Park and River Forest High School
Appointed by Oak Park and River Forest High School

Dawn Dalton

Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network
Appointed by the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network

Augustinia Gonzalez

Acting Commander, Area Central, Chicago Police Dept.
Appointed by the Chicago Police Department

Kathi Griffin

Vice President, Illinois Education Association
Appointed by the Illinois Education Association

Steven Isoye

Superintendent, Oak Park and River Forest HS
Appointed by the Illinois Assoc. of School Administrators

Calvin Jackson

Legislative Liaison
Illinois Assoc. of School Business Officials
Appointed by the Ill. Assoc. of School Bus. Officials

Sharmili Majmudar

Executive Director, Rape Victim Advocates
Appointed by Rape Victim Advocates

Senator Matt Murphy

Appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate

Sue Myers

Orland Council of Educators, District 135
Appointed by the Illinois Federation of Teachers

Phil Prale

Assistant Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction
Oak Park and River Forest High School
Appointed by Oak Park and River Forest High School

Denise Racky

Nurse, Chicago Public Schools
Appointed by the Chicago Teachers Union

Clay Reagan

Driver/Physical Education Department Head
Oak Park and River Forest High School
Appointed by Oak Park and River Forest High School

Diane Rutledge

Executive Director, Large Unit District Association
Appointed by the Large Unit District Association

Paul Schewe

Director
Interdisciplinary Ctr. for Research on Violence at UIC
University of Illinois at Chicago

Ben Schwarm

Deputy Executive Director
Illinois Association of School Boards
Appointed by the Illinois Assoc. of School Boards

Tiffany Seay

Director, Youth Development & Positive Behavior Support
Chicago Public Schools
Appointed by Chicago Public Schools

Vickie Smith

Executive Director, Ill. Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Appointed by the Ill. Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Kevin Westall

Principal, West Richland High School
Appointed by the Illinois Principals Association

Sheriff John Zaruba

Sheriff, DuPage County
Appointed by the Illinois Sherriffs' Association

OVERVIEW

On August 20, 2012, Governor Quinn signed into law Public Act 97-1037 which created the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force. The law, which was sponsored by Representative Camille Lilly in the Illinois House of Representatives and by Senator Don Harmon in the Illinois Senate, created the task force in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a domestic violence awareness and prevention program, the Step Back Program, at Oak Park and River Forest High School and to make recommendations to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly that might help to guide the implementation of domestic violence prevention programs at schools throughout the state.

The Task Force, as a whole, met four times to consider evidence and approaches to achieving its charge, deliberate on recommendations, and develop this report. In order to accomplish the goals set forth in Public Act 97-1037, the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force divided into three committees: the Feasibility and Resource committee, the Evaluation Committee and the Project Development committee. The Task Force also held one public hearing to present information on the Step Back Program and on the Task Force and to solicit feedback from parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community on implementation of domestic violence awareness and prevention programs in schools. Taking into consideration the realities faced by schools today and with focused discussions in the committees, the Task Force proposed standards for domestic violence and sexual assault prevention curricula. It also assessed the feasibility of implementing more comprehensive violence prevention programs throughout the state and recommended guidelines for evaluating programs that are implemented. The Task Force's recommendations are included in this report on page 8, and draft legislation can be found in Exhibit A.

BACKGROUND

Every 15 seconds, a woman in the United States is physically abused by her intimate partner.¹ In 1986, the Illinois General Assembly enacted the Illinois Domestic Violence Act of 1986. The Domestic Violence Act recognized domestic violence as a serious crime against the individual and society which produces family disharmony in thousands of Illinois families, promotes patterns of escalating violence which frequently culminate in serious physical injury, and creates an emotional atmosphere that is not conducive to healthy child development.

According to the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), in 2006 there were 114,921 reported cases of domestic violence, 3,798 reported violations of protection orders, and 1,639 reported domestic related offenses involving children.² Between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013, 58 incidents of domestic violence resulted in the deaths of 80 individuals. In the same year, over 44,000 adults in Illinois requested (and received) some form of domestic violence services, more than 60% of whom required assistance seeking orders of protection in civil courts. They were not alone: over 8,000 children were also served.³

According to the Center for Disease and Prevention, an average of 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States.⁴

Nearly 1 in 5 women – or nearly 22 million – have been raped in their lifetimes; nearly half of the female survivors were raped before they were 18. 1 in 71 men – or almost 1.6 million – have been raped in their lifetime.⁵ One out of every seven adult women, or more than 670,000 adult women in Illinois, has been the victim of forcible rape sometime in her lifetime.⁶ Illinois rape crisis centers provided counseling and advocacy services to approximately 18,000 survivors in FY13.⁷

Children exposed to domestic violence in their homes may have short and long-term physical, emotional, and learning problems, including increased aggression, decreased responsiveness to adults, failure to thrive, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance and hyperactivity, eating and sleeping problems, and developmental delays.⁸

Given the seriousness of the problem of domestic violence in our society and the detrimental effect such violence has on families and on children, schools have begun to develop prevention and intervention programs designed to teach boys and girls about inter-personal violence with the goal

1 <http://www.isp.state.il.us/crime/domesticviol.cfm>

2 National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Illinois Domestic Violence Acts <http://www.ncadv.org/files/Illinois.pdf>

3 Data provided by the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

4 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, December 2010 Summary Report

5 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, December 2010 Summary Report.

6 Rape in Illinois: A Report to the State. 2003. National Violence Against Women Prevention Research Center.

7 Data provided by the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

8 Edleson, J.L., "Children's witnessing of domestic violence," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14:839-70 (1999). See also, Harris, W. W., Putnam, F. W. and Fairbank, J. A., "Mobilizing Trauma Resources for Children," Paper presented at Johnson and Johnson Pediatric Institute: Shaping the Future of Children's Health (2004), 4-6.

and the hope that young people exposed to this type of program in high school will be less likely to be the perpetrators or victims of domestic violence as they grow into adulthood.

Task Force Legislation - P.A. 97-1037

Pursuant to P.A. 97-1037, the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force was charged to do the following:⁹

1. Conduct meetings to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of statewide implementation of the curricula of the Step Back Program at Oak Park and River Forest High School, located in Cook County, Illinois, for the prevention of domestic violence.
2. Invite the testimony of and confer with experts on relevant topics as needed.
3. Propose content for integration into school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence.
4. Propose a method of training facilitators on the school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence.
5. Propose partnerships with anti-violence agencies to assist with the facilitator roles and the nature of the partnerships.
6. Evaluate the approximate cost per school or school district to implement and maintain school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence.
7. Propose a funding source or sources to support school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence and agencies that provide training to the facilitators, such as a fee to be charged in domestic violence, sexual assault, and related cases to be collected by the clerk of the court for deposit into a special fund in the State treasury and to be used to fund a proposed eradicate domestic violence program in the schools of this State.
8. Propose an evaluation structure to ensure that the school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence is effectively taught by trained facilitators.
9. Propose a method of evaluation for the purpose of modifying the content of the curriculum over time, including whether studies of the program should be conducted by the University of Illinois' Interpersonal Violence Prevention Information Center.
10. Recommend legislation developed by the task force, such as amending Sections 27-5 through 27-13.3 and 27-23.4 of this Code, and legislation to create a fee to be charged in domestic violence, sexual assault, and related cases to be collected by the clerk of court for deposit into a special fund in the State treasury and to be used to fund a proposed eradicate domestic violence program in the schools of this State.
11. Produce a report of the task force's findings on best practices and policies, which shall include a plan with a phased and prioritized implementation timetable for implementation of school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence in schools.

The Task Force was due to report to the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor on or before April 1, 2014 on its findings and recommendations.

⁹ Illinois General Assembly, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=097-1037>.

Process and Deliberations

The Task Force, as a whole, met four times to consider evidence and approaches to achieving its charge, deliberate on recommendations, and develop this report. In order to accomplish the goals set forth in Public Act 97-1037, the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force divided into three committees: the Project Development committee, the Feasibility and Resource committee and the Evaluation Committee. Committees met independently to develop recommendations that were then brought back to the Task Force as a whole. On November 14, 2013, the Task Force held one public hearing to present information on the Step Back Program and on the task force and to solicit feedback from parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community on implementation of domestic violence awareness and prevention programs in schools. The transcript of the public hearing is attached to this report as Exhibit C.

The Project Development Committee

The Project Development Committee was charged with drafting proposed content for integration into school curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence and sexual assault. In its work to develop standards, the committee looked to national, statewide and local guidelines and models to inform its proposal. The standards the committee presented to the Task Force as a whole were drawn from the National Sexuality Education Standards, which were developed by an ongoing initiative called the Future of Sex Education (FoSE), used by many school districts across the country. The intent of the standards is to inform school districts what students should be able to demonstrate after receiving classroom instruction on dating violence and sexual assault prevention.

The Project Development Committee was also tasked with proposing a method of training facilitators on curricula aimed at preventing domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as proposing partnerships with anti-violence agencies to assist with the facilitator roles and the nature of the partnerships.

The Feasibility and Resource Committee

The Feasibility and Resource Development Committee of the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force was responsible for determining how a framework for prevention programming adopted voluntarily by schools across Illinois might be implemented. They were also responsible for examining what comprehensive violence prevention might cost.

The Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee of the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force was responsible for determining how a framework for prevention programming adopted voluntarily by schools across Illinois might be evaluated.

Educational and Funding Considerations

While reviewing the Step Back Program, developing standards, and drafting recommendations for the Illinois General Assembly, Governor, and other stakeholders, the Task Force discussed multiple considerations related to implementing domestic violence prevention programs in Illinois:

- Illinois schools are facing resource constraints as they try to meet a variety of mandates with limited funds and staff. The Task Force recognized these limitations and attempted to make recommendations that would assist schools with meeting current mandates without requiring a specific program or curriculum which might not be feasible for all schools or districts. The Task Force attempted to avoid burdening schools with additional administrative requirements.
- Funding would be necessary to implement a program in all Illinois schools. Given the financial situation of the State, alternative sources of funding, other than state dollars, would need to be developed.
- While the Task Force's evaluation of the Step Back Program was overwhelmingly positive, the Task Force's guidelines and recommendations would be crafted so as to not restrict the use of other evidence-based violence prevention being used throughout the state.
- The diversity in size, location, and resources of school districts vary significantly within Illinois, so Task Force recommendations would have to be flexible enough to allow for appropriate adaptation by different districts.

For these reasons, the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force does not recommend developing a single, mandatory, statewide domestic violence or sexual assault curriculum, nor does it recommend creating the infrastructure that would be necessary at the State level to mandate said curriculum in every Illinois school. Implementation timetables for the establishment of a mandatory statewide program have not been included in this report.

Relevant Educational Mandates

The Task Force recognizes that there are a number of existing violence prevention requirements for Illinois public schools. Listed below are requirements that are explicitly required in law or administrative regulations. Non-binding and/or optional programs or initiatives are not included. In developing a program based on Task Force recommendations, school districts are advised that, depending on how the program is crafted, it might fulfill some or all of these mandates and allow for districts to consolidate and streamline programs for cost efficiency and enhanced effectiveness in programming.

- A. Policy on Teen Dating Violence** [105 ILCS 110/3.10]. Districts must adopt a policy on teen dating violence that:
1. States that teen dating violence is unacceptable and prohibited and that each student has the right to a safe learning environment.
 2. Incorporates age-appropriate education about teen dating violence in new or existing training programs for students in grades 7 through 12 and school employees.

3. Establishes procedures for the manner in which employees of a school are to respond to incidents of teen dating violence that take place at the school, on school grounds, at school-sponsored activities, or in vehicles used for school-provided transportation.
4. Identifies by job title the school officials who are responsible for receiving reports related to teen dating violence.
5. Notifies students and parents of the teen dating violence policy adopted by the board.

B. Sexual Abuse/Assault Awareness [105 ILCS 110/3]. Age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education is required in grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

C. Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution [105 ILCS 5/27-23.4]. School districts shall provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution education for grades kindergarten through 12 and may include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein. School districts may give regular school credit for satisfactory completion by the student of such courses. Such instruction must include:

1. The consequences of violent behavior.
2. The causes of violent reactions to conflict.
3. Nonviolent conflict resolution techniques.
4. The relationship between drugs, alcohol and violence.

Note: This curriculum requirement is applicable only if funded sufficiently through private or federal funds. Funds are not available and, hence, this provision is not currently being monitored for compliance.

D. Sexual Intimidation and Harassment [23 IAC 200.50 (f)]. No student shall be subjected to sexual intimidation or harassment by any school employee, by other students, or by the effect of any school policy or practice.

E. Bullying Prevention [105 ILCS 5/27-23.7]. Each district must adopt a bullying policy that is communicated annually to parents and students, and is updated every two (2) years. Such updates must be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education. "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

F. ROE Teacher Institutes [105 ILCS 5/3-11]. Teachers institutes shall include teacher training committed to (i) peer counseling programs and other anti-violence and conflict

resolution programs, including without limitation programs for preventing at risk students from committing violent acts.

- G. Warning Signs of Suicidal Behavior** [105 ILCS 5/10-22.39 (b)]. In addition to other topics at in-service training programs, school guidance counselors, teachers, school social workers, and other school personnel who work with pupils in grades 7 through 12 shall be trained to identify the warning signs of mental illness and suicidal behavior in adolescents and teens and shall be taught appropriate intervention and referral techniques.
- H. Domestic and Sexual Violence In-Service** [105 ILCS 5/10-22.39 (d)]. At least once every 2 years, an in-service training program for school personnel who work with pupils must be conducted by persons with expertise in domestic and sexual violence and the needs of expectant and parenting youth and shall include training concerning (i) communicating with and listening to youth victims of domestic or sexual violence and expectant and parenting youth, (ii) connecting youth victims of domestic or sexual violence and expectant and parenting youth to appropriate in-school services and other agencies, programs, and services as needed, and (iii) implementing the school district's policies, procedures, and protocols with regard to such youth, including confidentiality. At a minimum, school personnel must be trained to understand, provide information and referrals, and address issues pertaining to youth who are parents, expectant parents, or victims of domestic or sexual violence.
- I. Chicago Public Schools Violence Prevention Hotline** [105 ILCS 5/34-21.8]. Must be answered, monitored and staffed by the Chicago Police Department. The purpose of the hot line is to allow for anonymous calls to help prevent violence.
- J. School Counseling Services** [105 ILCS 5/10-22.24b]. School counseling services in the public schools may be provided by school counselors as defined in Section 10-22.24a. School counseling services include but are not limited to: (1) educational planning; (2) career development and counseling; (3) college counseling; (4) developing and facilitating anti-violence education or conflict resolution programs, or both; (5) providing crisis intervention programs within the school setting; (6) making appropriate referrals to outside agencies; (7) interpreting achievement, career, and vocational test information; (8) developing individual career plans for all students; (9) providing individual and small group counseling; (10) addressing the developmental needs of students by designing curricula for classroom counseling and guidance; (11) consulting and counseling with parents for the academic, career, and personal success of their children; (12) facilitating school to work transition programs; and (13) supervising school counseling interns enrolled in school counseling programs that meet the standards of the State Board of Education. Nothing in this Section prohibits other qualified professionals, including other certificated school personnel, from providing those services listed in this Section.
- K. School Psychological Services** [105 ILCS 5/14-9.01.1]. In the public schools, school psychological services provided by qualified specialists who hold Type 73 School Service Personnel Certificates endorsed for school psychology issued by the State Teacher Certification Board may include, but are not limited to: (i) administration and interpretation of psychological and educational evaluations; (ii) developing school-based prevention

programs, including violence prevention programs; (iii) counseling with students, parents, and teachers on educational and mental health issues; (iv) acting as liaisons between public schools and community agencies; (v) evaluating program effectiveness; (vi) providing crisis intervention within the school setting; (vii) helping teachers, parents, and others involved in the educational process to provide optimum teaching and learning conditions for all students; (viii) supervising school psychologist interns enrolled in school psychology programs that meet the standards established by the State Board of Education; and (ix) screening of school enrollments to identify children who should be referred for individual study. Nothing in this Section prohibits other qualified professionals from providing those services listed for which they are appropriately trained.

- L. School Social Work Services** [105 ILCS 5/14-9.01.2]. School social work services may include, among other items: developing and implementing school-based prevention programs, including mediation and violence prevention, implementing social and emotional education programs and services, and establishing and implementing bullying prevention and intervention programs.

The extent to which any of the aforementioned provisions may apply to a particular district or school depends upon a number of factors. Further, districts and schools may meet relevant provisions in a number of ways and through a variety of resources.

THE STEP BACK PROGRAM

History and Background

The purpose of the Step Back Program is to encourage students to choose behaviors that will yield a reduction in perpetrated and experienced violence during their lives by engaging them in classroom activities, self-reflection and peer support.

Started in 2009, Step Back was created in partnership with the Physical Education Department at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) in order to provide incoming freshmen with the knowledge and skills to allow them to identify the warning signs of unhealthy relationships, critically evaluate gender stereotypes, understand and manage their emotions, and foster healthy friendships and relationships.

The Step Back Program was inspired by a girl's self-defense class that has been taught by the OPRFHS Physical Education Department on an elective basis since the 1980's. R.A.D. Systems began providing the basic self-defense instruction in 2003. As the class evolved, it became more and more popular, enrolling primarily 11th and 12th grade girls. The program became mandatory in 2009 for all ninth grade students and remains a core component of the ninth grade P.E. curriculum today.

Overview

The Step Back model is an intensive and comprehensive anti-violence program which is facilitated jointly between a high school (in this case, Oak Park and River Forest High School) and a non-profit violence prevention agency (Sarah's Inn). The program is sex-segregated for the majority of classes and adopts a bystander approach to curriculum delivery.

Step Back is structured to allow facilitators to meet with students every day for nine weeks (45 sessions). The program is composed of three units, each of which meets for 15 class sessions.

- Unit One: **Self-Awareness**
 Gender stereotypes
 Dangerous implications
- Unit Two: **Self-Defense**
 Physical self-defense techniques
- Unit Three: **Relationship Awareness**
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Dating violence | Suicide |
| Sexual harassment | Bullying |
| Sexual assault | Cyber-safety |
| Sexual consent | |

Logistical Information on Oak Park and River Forest High School

Oak Park and River Forest High School serves approximately 3,200 students in west suburban Chicago. The racial composition of the student body is 56% Caucasian, 27% African American, eight percent Hispanic, six percent multi-racial, and three percent Asian. Sixteen percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, OPRF spent \$18,995 in operating costs per pupil, \$5463 above the state average.

Duration

Step Back is designed to be one full academic quarter, which lasts between nine and ten weeks, or 45 to 50 class sessions. By dedicating this amount of time, facilitators are able to:

- ▶ Build relationships with students that help reduce resistance, increase retention of core concepts, and lead to long term changes in fundamental attitudes and behaviors.
- ▶ Deliver one comprehensive program that covers a full spectrum of relationship violence issues, many of which stem from an unhealthy need for power and control. This integration makes sense not only from a student's perspective, but is appealing to schools that are attempting to satisfy legislative mandates in a piece-meal fashion.
- ▶ Move beyond awareness education and toward the learning of practical skills and tools that will yield effective and non-violent results.
- ▶ Incorporate journaling and self-reflection into the core of the curriculum. The students meet daily and are responsible for keeping a journal of their reactions to, reflections on, and agreements or disagreements with the ideas presented to them.
- ▶ Integrate media that is relevant to adolescents. Approximately 25% of in-class time involves some form of TV, film, documentary or print media.

Mandatory Participation

Because the Step Back Program is mandatory for all freshmen, it has the potential to effect culture change within an entire school community. If the program was offered as an elective class, it would likely attract only students already expressing interest in preventing violence. If adopted only as an intervention or diversion program, it would be unable to impact the vast majority of students who are best positioned to change cultural norms and offer positive pressures as bystanders. Because every student in the school is enrolled in Step Back, older students are able to reinforce positive norms for new students, thereby affecting the culture of the entire school and even the greater community.

Co-Facilitators and Other Partners

The Step Back Program is co-facilitated between the dedicated Physical Education faculty at Oak Park and River Forest High School and a Sarah's Inn violence prevention counselor. Engaging the

Physical Education department in co-facilitation provides continuity and increased investment in the programming by school personnel.

The program will almost always surface additional counseling needs, particularly after the most sensitive topics are covered. Further counseling resources are made available to the students and are utilized each year. At OPRF, these services are primarily provided through their own contracted counselors, but are also provided by Sarah's Inn on an as-needed basis. Members of the Oak Park Police Department also participate in the curriculum and help administer the self-defense training. Facilitators speak highly of this approach as it allows more positive relationships to be built between teens, law enforcement and the school.

Sex Segregation

The overwhelming majority of violence that is perpetrated against men, women or children is perpetrated by men. Unhealthy and often dangerous perceptions of masculinity and what it means is at the core of male-perpetrated violence. Many adolescent boys have the misconception that aggression, dominance, and violence should be an integral part of their self-identities as men. Accordingly, masculinity awareness is at the foundation of the Step Back curriculum for boys.

This component is designed to be facilitated in a male-only classroom setting. Evaluation data supports the success of this methodology. Because the nature of physical and sexual assaults on men tends to be very different from assaults on women, the nature of the physical defense techniques taught to each group are different. While the topics taught in the third unit are similar for both classes, the perspectives from which they are taught and subsequent learning objectives are necessarily different.

Bystander Model

The Step Back model addresses students as potential bystanders to violent behavior. This is an approach common to prevention programs and consistent with best practices. Other approaches address participants as potential victims or perpetrators of violence. Studies show that these approaches raise the chance that students will leave a workshop more resistant to violence prevention efforts than when they entered.¹⁰

The Step Back Program teaches potential witnesses safe and positive ways that they can act to prevent or intervene when there is a risk for physical, sexual, or relationship violence. It also gives students the skills to be effective and supporting allies to peers who have been the victims of violence and prioritizes healthy peer pressure as the most successful intervening factor for reducing violence.

10 Schewe, P.A. (2002). Guidelines for Developing Rape Prevention and Risk Reduction Interventions. In P.A. Schewe (Ed.), Preventing Violence in Relationships: Interventions Across the Life Span. (pp. 107-136). Washington D.C: APA Books.

Step Back Curriculum, Goals, and Objectives

The primary purpose of the Step Back Program is to build awareness that will increase student willingness to choose behaviors that will lead to a reduction in perpetrated and experienced violence during their lives. The program has six major goals, of which the first five are quantitatively evaluated: reduce violence, healthy and pro-social relationship development, acquisition of coping skills, risk reduction, gender norm awareness, and community building.

GOAL ONE: REDUCE VIOLENCE: Students will demonstrate increased willingness and ability to reduce their roles in perpetrating violence during their lives.

Reducing Physical Violence Objectives

- 1a.A. Students will demonstrate a desire to avoid physically violent conflict.
- 1a.B. Students will demonstrate an increased understanding of the consequences of physical violence.
- 1a.C. Students will show proficiency in physical self-defense skills.
- 1a.D. Students will demonstrate increased knowledge of the ways that cultural gender-role stereotypes lead to physical violence.
- 1a.E. Students will demonstrate a willingness and ability to resolve interpersonal conflict in nonviolent ways.
- 1a.F. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of the ways emotions lead to physical violence.

Reducing Dating Violence Objectives

- 1b.A. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power and control.
- 1b.B. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of behaviors that lead to instances of physical, emotional and sexual forms of dating violence.
- 1b.C. Students will demonstrate a desire to avoid behaviors that lead to instances of physical, emotional and sexual forms of dating violence in so far as they are capable in their own lives.
- 1b.D. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of the impact of dating violence.

Reducing Sexual Violence Objectives

- 1c.A. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of how and why sexual assault occurs.
- 1c.B. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of the consequences of sexual assault for victims and perpetrators.

1c.C. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of how and why sexual harassment occurs.

1c.D. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of the consequences of sexual harassment for victims.

Reducing Bullying Objectives

1d.A. Students will demonstrate increased knowledge on consequences of interpersonal harassment.

1d.B. Students will demonstrate decreased willingness to engage in interpersonal harassment.

GOAL TWO: HEALTHY AND PRO-SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of healthy and pro-social relationship dynamics.

Objectives

2A. Students will be able to identify healthy and unhealthy aspects of intimate relationships.

2B. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of adaptive communication skills.

2C. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of how consent is communicated.

GOAL THREE: COPING: Students will demonstrate an increased ability to cope with experienced verbal or physical violence.

Objectives

3A. Students will demonstrate an increased knowledge of emotions and the ways in which they impact our lives.

3B. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of healthy coping strategies in dealing with emotional difficulty or trauma.

3C. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of the reality of suicide and the reasons it occurs.

3D. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of where they may seek help in coping with emotional difficulty or trauma.

GOAL FOUR: RISK REDUCTION: Students will demonstrate increased willingness and ability to reduce risks lead to being victimized in instances of interpersonal violence

Objectives

4A. Students will demonstrate an increased ability and willingness to reduce personal risks when using cyber means of communication.

4B. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of how to reduce risks in personal safety (i.e. traveling in groups, escape, etc.)

4C. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of the ways having healthy personal boundaries can reduce risks in interpersonal relationships.

GOAL FIVE: GENDER NORM AWARENESS: Students will demonstrate an increased willingness and ability to decide for themselves what masculinity and femininity mean in their experience of society.

Objectives

5A. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of the reality of gender stereotypes in local and national culture.

5B. Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of why stereotypes are perpetuated.

5C. Students will show increased ability to depersonalize gender role stereotypes in their lives.

GOAL SIX: CREATE COMMUNITY: Students will demonstrate increased empathy and awareness of the experiences of others in their lives.

STEP BACK EVALUATION

Correlated Evidence

During the first year of the program's implementation (2009-2010), the school experienced a decrease in all violence related infractions (e.g. fighting, mob action). The greatest decrease came in the number of students that committed a mob action offence. There were 17 such offences during the 08-09 academic year (considered typical), and only three during the first year of the program's implementation.

Evaluation of Program Effectiveness

In the fall of 2012, an independent researcher from Carnegie Mellon University published a report of Step Back's effectiveness. Data was collected from 177 male ninth grade students who participated in Step Back during the 2011-2012 school year at Oak Park and River Forest High School.

Individual learning objectives were measured through the use of paired pre- and post-tests. The instruments included 26 items that were used to measure attitude, knowledge, and behavioral intention gaps and gains in the five goal areas of the program, which included:

- (1) Coping
- (2) Healthy and Pro-Social Relationships
- (3) Masculinity Awareness
- (4) Violence Reduction
- (5) Risk Reduction.

The pre-test results indicated large gaps between the desired response and the actual responses for 18 of the 26 items.

The report concluded that knowledge gaps were significantly narrowed in each of the goal areas for students participating in Step Back. The highest improvements occurred in the following goal areas: masculinity awareness (100% narrowing of the knowledge/attitude gap), Coping (75%), and Risk Reduction (67%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force recommends that comprehensive domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programming meet the following objectives from the National Sexuality Education Standards:

- Compare and contrast the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Describe the potential impacts of power differences such as age, status or position within relationships
- Analyze the similarities and differences between friendships and romantic relationships
- Describe a range of ways people express affection within various types of relationships
- Analyze the ways in which friends, family, media, society and culture can influence relationships
- Demonstrate effective ways to communicate personal boundaries and show respect for the boundaries of others
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of communicating using technology and social media
- Analyze the impact of technology and social media on friendships and relationships
- Develop a plan to stay safe when using social media
- Describe strategies to use social media safely, legally and respectfully
- Explain why a person who has been raped or sexually assaulted is not at fault
- Define sexual consent and explain its implications for sexual decision-making.
- Identify sources of supports such as parents or other trusted adults that they can go to if they are or someone they know is being bullied, harassed, abused or assaulted
- Analyze the laws related to bullying, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual assault, incest, rape and dating violence
- Explain that the use of violence is always a choice, regardless of risk factors including, but not limited to drug or alcohol use and/or family history.¹¹

Programming under this framework is intended to supplement components of physical education and health curricula already in place in Illinois schools. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that this programming take place as part of regularly-scheduled physical education or health classes,

¹¹ This objective is not contained within the National Sexuality Education Standards, but the Task Force felt it important enough to recommend its inclusion in domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programming.

not after school or during student lunch or homeroom periods. Illinois Learning Standards addressed under this framework can be found in Exhibit B.

The Step Back curriculum addresses a few topics that are not included in the objectives listed above but that may not be addressed in the same manner in every school or district in Illinois. The Task Force allows that certain topics may be included in the framework's required 560 minutes so long as the objectives above are successfully met. Optional subjects may include the following, especially as they relate to domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, based on the needs of students, schools, and individual communities.

- Physical self-defense
- Conflict management
- Communication skills
- Sexual Harassment
- Gang Violence
- Mental Health
- Suicide

Teaching physical self-defense skills has been made optional because it is not strictly necessary as a means of providing students with the knowledge and skills to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault. However, because the R.A.D. Systems Basic Physical Defense course for women and R.A.D. For Men Resisting Aggression with Defense course for men have been important factors in the success of the Step Back Program, the Task Force recommends that physical self-defense skills be taught as a component of comprehensive violence prevention programming where possible. This also allows programming to be better integrated with current physical education curricula.

Time, Enrollment and Training Commitment

The Task Force finds that even experienced facilitators with willing participants would be unable to meet these objectives in any less than 560 minutes of instruction. For comparison, this would require a minimum of 14 forty-minute classes or 10 fifty-six-minute classes. We also find that no amount of class time can be effective without a well-trained or experienced facilitator. The Task Force recommends that program facilitators receive no less than 24 hours of in-person training by a state-certified domestic violence or sexual assault agency or coalition.

An important factor in the success of the Step Back Program was the mandatory participation of 100% of students enrolled at Oak Park and River Forest High School. The Task Force recommends that schools in Illinois, if they wish to replicate this success, must ensure that 100% of students are enrolled in comprehensive programming for no less than 560 minutes. A school's normal absence policy would apply to students who are enrolled in programming but absent.

Partnership

Participating schools that choose to adopt the Eradicate Domestic Violence Framework will be required to develop a relationship with either a local rape crisis or domestic violence agency. The

school district must, at minimum, demonstrate annually that it has solicited assistance from the nearest agency. These relationships allow the agencies the opportunity to discuss how facilitators, counselors, and social workers might handle student disclosures and referrals. This collaboration is intended to support schools' efforts to respond to student needs and keep them safe, as well as to connect schools with expertise in violence prevention facilitation and targeted, evidence-based curricula. An annually-renewed networking agreement between the school and the nearest agency would be one acceptable demonstration of communication and relationship.

The Task Force understands that in some Illinois counties, a school may be dozens of miles away from the nearest domestic violence agency or rape crisis center. This is not a new or unknown challenge for the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) or the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA). According to ICADV, there is a domestic violence agency representing every county in the State, and ICASA's website allows a school to search for its nearest rape crisis center by address. While accessibility of resources and support may always be an obstacle for rural school districts, the Task Force does not find that the creation and annual renewal of a networking agreement by phone, fax, or email should be an undue burden to any school invested in providing for student needs and safety by implementing comprehensive violence prevention programming according to this framework.

Evaluation

Participating schools would be eligible to participate in an evaluation process focused on program development and improvement. It is the intent Task Force to provide participating schools guidance on how to improve or create a domestic violence prevention program. The purpose of the evaluation process is to provide information that will aid in the training of students, faculty, staff, and schools to implement an effective antiviolence program.

The Task Force recommends providing as much information as possible to schools regarding the process and outcomes of their prevention program(s), and to facilitate their ability to access resources that are available to assist them. While the results of the process and outcome evaluations will provide information and recommendations regarding program improvement in line with established best practices, quality control and the implementation of any recommendations for program improvement will be left to the sole discretion of each individual school.

The Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force is responsible for determining how a framework for prevention programming adopted voluntarily by schools across Illinois might be evaluated, and has come to the following conclusions:

Two types of evaluations would be useful in assessing the progress of participating schools: Process Evaluation and Outcome Evaluation. The Process Evaluation will involve a checklist allowing schools to keep track of and submit the optional and required components of programming as determined by the Task Force. The Outcome Evaluation will consist of a pre- and post-intervention assessment that will be administered to participating students either on paper or electronically, whichever is easiest for the school. Both of these surveys could be administered on a website similar to the one created by the University of Illinois for the Illinois Youth Survey about drug abuse. The

website permits online or paper surveys, and there is no cost to schools to have their students take the survey or to obtain the resulting reports.

The Process Evaluation framework will be based upon mandates already existing within the school code, as well as ‘best practice’ standards for implementing domestic violence prevention programming in schools. The checklist will provide a place for schools to document their domestic violence and sexual assault prevention activities.

The outcome assessment is a means of evaluating program success; it is not intended as a research tool and as such should not require an IRB-approved parental consent form and students will be able to opt-out upon request (or request of their parents). The pre- and post-intervention assessment will document changes in students’ knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to the domestic violence prevention curriculum. The outcome evaluation data will be comparable across all participating schools in Illinois. Thus the school specific results can be compared to statewide averages so that a school administrator can know where their school falls comparatively. School-specific information will only be shared with school administrators, and are only intended to be used for program improvement.

Annual Letter of Participation

Program evaluation would be voluntary, self-reporting and independent of the school district. A letter describing a school’s strengths and recommendations for program improvement would be generated for each school participating in the program and its evaluation. These letters could be generated by the regional director, using the results of the process and outcome evaluations that could be administered through a website as mentioned above. Schools that participate in both the process and outcome evaluation would receive more detailed feedback and recommendations. This letter could be submitted to ISBE by the school if the school desires.

Illinois Youth Survey

The committee also recommends administering the Illinois Youth Survey in addition to the Eradicate Domestic Violence process and outcome evaluation instruments. The Illinois Youth Survey does not require students to opt in but it contains an “Opt Out” process. The Illinois Youth Survey is an online or paper survey administered by the University of Illinois center for Prevention Research and Development on a special website created specifically for the survey from a grant from the Illinois Department of Human Resources to capture information concern student drug use. This helps with program planning for prevention of drug use. There is no cost to schools to permit their students to take the survey nor is there a cost to schools to obtain the results of the survey. This survey would be helpful to the schools and toward eradicating domestic violence, in that substance abuse is a contributing factor to domestic violence in many cases.

Site Visits/Interviews

Each participating school should schedule a site visit/interview between the program lead and the assigned regional director, if one is made available by the State or an oversight university or anti-violence agency or coalition. The site visit/interview will be exclusively supportive in nature and not used for evaluation purposes. Continual communication is important for the success of the

prevention program. The schools program lead should discuss their success with the program, challenges, and the need for additional materials and/or resources. The results of the process and outcome evaluations would be used for these meetings.

Assessment of Needs, Program Improvement, and Resource Sharing

Representatives from the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Violence (ICADV), the Illinois Coalition against Sexual Assault (ICASA), members of the Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Violence at UIC, and other unspecified representatives will meet annually to review the evaluation results and to update the goals and resources recommended by the Task Force legislation. This meeting could take place at a conference conducted before or during an annual educational conference that already exists in Illinois (IASA, IPA, or III, for example). Schools, agencies, and districts would be able to collaborate, present their successes, and request technical assistance at these conferences.

Additionally, the Task Force Recommends that an electronic, internet-based clearing house be created to facilitate resource-sharing and supplement pre-facilitator training for program facilitators. This clearing house could be created and managed by an Illinois university, a domestic violence or sexual assault coalition or agency, or a statewide agency in the event that the Illinois Legislature establishes infrastructure for the coordination an Eradicate Domestic Violence framework.

Funding

While the cost of implementing comprehensive violence prevention programming under the Eradicate Domestic Violence Framework can and should be kept relatively low, the Task Force understands that no changes to existing curricula are cost-free. Due to the diversity in size, location, and resources of school districts in Illinois, as well as the vastly different levels of violence prevention programming that already exist in different communities, there is no way to develop a single program-adoption budget appropriate to all Illinois schools. Schools interested in adopting this framework will need to consider costs involved in the following:

- Facilitator training
- Appropriate stipends or donations to local, supporting domestic violence agencies or rape crisis centers
- Professional development
- Substitute teachers
- Communication planning and execution
- In-kind resources such as classroom space, handouts, and supplies

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but rather to illustrate that some schools will need fewer additional resources than others.

Statewide Implementation Costs and Scholarship Funds

The Task Force finds that financial cost of implementing comprehensive violence prevention programming according to the Eradicate Domestic Violence framework will be relatively low for

many schools in Illinois, and significantly less than the cost of less comprehensive programming that is available commercially. For some schools, however, any additional cost would be prohibitive.

The Task Force recommends that a scholarship fund be setup to provide financial support for schools that are invested in improving their climate under this framework. It is important that any funding allocated to this effort be in addition to, and not reduce, conflict, or compete with the limited and vital funding already allocated to Illinois schools, domestic violence agencies, or rape crisis centers. The Circuit Court Clerk of Cook County, the Honorable Dorothy Brown, has suggested the following list of possible resources:

- Provide an opportunity to allow income tax refund recipients to voluntarily donate \$1.00 toward the initiative
- Create Illinois State Lottery domestic violence prevention “scratch-off” tickets
- Create a partnership with utility companies that would allow customers to voluntarily donate \$1.00 toward the initiative
- Create a \$5.00 domestic violence prevention fine to be charged in domestic violence, sexual assault, and related cases to be collected by the Clerk of the Court for deposit into a special fund in the State treasury and to be used to fund scholarships allowing Illinois schools to implement prevention programming under the Eradicate Domestic Violence Framework as specified on page 12
- Create a public/private partnership that would allow private sector employees and customers to voluntarily donate \$1.00 toward the initiative
- Increase marriage license fees
- Impose a mandatory fee on defendants guilty of violent crimes
- Lobby the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Health and Human Services to provide funding for domestic violence awareness and prevention in Illinois high schools under this framework
- Lobby the United State Department of Education to provide funding for domestic violence awareness and prevention in Illinois high schools under this framework

These funds could also be used to establish infrastructure in the event that the Illinois Legislature directs a statewide agency to coordinate the implantation of an Eradicate Domestic Violence framework.

Exhibit A

Resolution Encouraging the Establishment of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Programming in Illinois Schools

HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly recognizes that domestic violence and sexual assault are serious crimes against the individual and society which produces family disharmony in thousands of Illinois families, promotes patterns of escalating violence which frequently culminate in serious physical injury and creates an emotional atmosphere that is not conducive to healthy child development; and

WHEREAS, Abused children and children exposed to domestic violence in their homes may have short and long-term physical, emotional, and learning problems, including increased aggression, decreased responsiveness to adults, failure to thrive, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance and hyperactivity, eating and sleeping problems, and developmental delays; and

WHEREAS, Given the seriousness of the problem of domestic violence in our society and the detrimental effect such violence has on families and on children, schools have begun to develop intervention programs designed to teach boys and girls about inter-personal violence with the goal and the hope that young people exposed to this type of program in high school will be less likely to be the perpetrators or the victims of domestic violence as they grow into adulthood; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly passed P.A. 97-1037 creating a task force charged with evaluating the effectiveness of a domestic violence awareness and prevention program, “the Step Back Program” at Oak Park River Forest High School and charged with making recommendations to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly that might help to guide the implementation of domestic violence prevention programs at schools throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force met from August 2013 through March 2014 and held one public hearing. The Task Force issued a report on April 1, 2014 to the Illinois General Assembly and to the Governor; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force report contained information on the Step Back Program and contained recommendations on best practices to establish domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs in schools;

WHEREAS, the Illinois General Assembly has already placed a number of curricular and programmatic requirements on school districts in the area of violence awareness and prevention; and

WHEREAS, domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs in schools can help reduce the chances that students will experience violence during their lives; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING HEREIN, that schools are encouraged to establish domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs with the goal of building awareness by students of these issues in order to increase the willingness of students to choose behaviors that will lead to a reduction in perpetrated and experienced violence during their lives; and be it further

RESOLVED, that violence prevention and sexual assault programs established by schools should meet the standards and guidelines recommended in the report prepared by the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force.

Exhibit B

Illinois Learning Standards Addressed by Eradicate Domestic Violence Framework Programming

Illinois Learning Standards
Addressed by Eradicate Domestic Violence Framework Programming

Physical Development & Health

STATE GOAL 19: Acquire movement skills and understand concepts needed to engage in health-enhancing physical activity.

A. Demonstrate physical competency in individual and team sports, creative movement and leisure and work-related activities.

19.A.4 Perform skills efficiently in a variety of leisure activities, sports, creative movement and work-related activities.

B. Analyze various movement concepts and applications.

19.B.4 Analyze various movement patterns for efficiency and effectiveness.

C. Demonstrate knowledge of rules, safety and strategies during physical activity.

19.C.4a Develop rules and safety procedures for physical activities.

19.C.4b Select and apply offensive, defensive and cooperative strategies in selected activities, games and sports.

STATE GOAL 21: Develop team-building skills by working with others through physical activity.

A. Demonstrate individual responsibility during group physical activities.

21.A.4a Demonstrate decision-making skills both independently and with others during physical activities.

21.A.4b Apply identified procedures and safe practices to all group physical activity settings.

STATE GOAL 22: Understand principles of health promotion and the prevention and treatment of illness and injury.

B. Describe and explain the factors that influence health among individuals, groups and communities.

22.B.4 Explain social and economic effects of health problems on individuals and society (e.g., cost of health care, reduction in productivity).

STATE GOAL 23. Understand human body systems and factors that influence growth and development.

B. Explain the effects of health-related actions on the body systems.

23.B.4 Explain immediate and long-term effects of health habits on the body systems (e.g., diet/heart disease, exercise/fat reduction, stress management/emotional health).

STATE GOAL 24: Promote and enhance health and well-being through the use of effective communication and decision-making skills.

A. Demonstrate procedures for communicating in positive ways, resolving differences and preventing conflict.

24.A.4a Describe the effects (e.g., economic losses, threats to personal safety) of conflict and violence upon the health of individuals, families and communities.

24.A.4b Formulate strategies to prevent conflict and resolve differences.

B. Apply decision-making skills related to the protection and promotion of individual health.

24.B.4 Explain how decision making affects the achievement of individual health goals.

C. Demonstrate skills essential to enhancing health and avoiding dangerous situations.

24.C.4 Formulate a plan to achieve individual health goals.

Exhibit C

**Transcript for the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Hearing
held Thursday, November 14th, 2013**

Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Hearing held Thursday, November 14th, 2013

Opening Remarks

Steven Isoye, Ph.D.
Superintendent for Oak Park River Forest High School
District 200

Good Afternoon everybody my name is Steven Isoye and I am the Superintendent at Oak Park River Forest High School District 200 and on behalf of District 200 we are very pleased to be hosting this hearing in regards to the domestic violence task force, a very important topic that we should be talking about throughout this state. I am really glad to see that this Task Force has been taken by our Representative that's here today, and also by Senator Don Harmon

I think that the words we will hear today will help the public understand the need for this type of work.

Today we have with us State Representative Camille Lilly, Co-Chair, Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force. We also have Chris Ptak, who is the Prevention Program Director of Sarah's Inn, Co-chair, Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force, and the Honorable Dorothy Brown, Clerk of the Circuit Court in Cook County who is the administrator in charge of all of the work and who has been shepherding along all of the things that need be put into place. And to her staff who is here today to help us in order to host this event for you today. State Senator Don Harmon is the Chief Senate Sponsor, he has Eileen Lynch in the audience today, she is his District Director, if at any point anyone has questions, she can carry them along to the Senator.

State Representative Camille Lilly:

I am excited to partner with Dorothy Brown, Senator Harmon and Oak Park River Forest Step Back Program to hear more about domestic violence. I was honored to sponsor House Bill 5689, which began a year ago. We put in place a Task Force to look at this issue and the goal is to Eradicate Domestic Violence and to me that means to end it, that means collectively address the issues related to domestic violence so that we can stop violence in our communities, in our families and in our households.

I am honored to be a part and a partner in making sure that we are collectively working on this issue and I'm very honored to have such talented people, compassionate leaders, youth and parents to be a part of this process.

I am here to listen and to learn, and I am hoping that you all are here to do the same.

Chris Ptak, Prevention Program Director of Sarah's Inn, Co-chair, Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force

Our goal today is to hear testimony that celebrates the Step Back program and the students here today and those that have participated in the past four years. We also want to celebrate the teachers and the administration that supported it.

In addition, we will be introduced to a program that can be used as a model for successful violence prevention across the state of Illinois. To do that we will hear from not only experts in social work, administration, and public policy, we are going to hear from students who have gone through the program themselves and how and why it has been useful and helpful in their lives. We will hear from teachers who have facilitated the program, the experiences of their administrators, the students who have experienced first-hand the impact of the program in their lives, and from parents who can and have been impacted by the Step Back program.

Testimony of Linda Carlson Teacher of Girls "Step Back" Program Oak Park and River Forest High School

Quiet, alert and with apprehension, thirty-six freshmen girls walk into their first Physical Education class of high school. They are overwhelmed navigating the building on their first day of school, maneuvering the crowded hallways, and are driving on high gear trying to figure out where they fit into the all-important social hierarchy. There is also great excitement – new friends, potential romances, dances to attend, sports to play, clubs to join, and memories of a lifetime to be made. Oh yes, and they must balance this while maintaining their academics. Their excitement and apprehension is palpable as I begin to introduce their PE class – Girls Step Back...a RADical self-defense class that goes beyond the physical by exploring how to defend the emotional and mental well-being of teenage girls.

As we explore the Step Back curriculum, I'm humbled as these young girls begin peeling back the layers of their 13-year-old selves. They begin to share and relate to each other as they discover they are more similar in experience than different. One by one girls reveal their struggles and victories of wrestling with living in a rape culture – a world that victim blaming and sexual objectification of women is the unconscious beat to which most of the world moves. It's all too evident that the result is young girls not KNOWING TO THE CORE that HER VOICE is VALUABLE and is a powerful personal weapon. Many also struggle with understanding THEIR BODIES – that it BELONGS TO THEM... and no one else.

I'm saddened to know that as these freshmen girls are trying to navigate high school, many of them are ALREADY carrying heavy stories. There are SURVIVORS IN THE ROOM. There are victims of sexual violence and/or physical violence at the hands of family, housemates, dating partners, a trusted person or a stranger. I understood that statistically I'd have survivors BUT it's overwhelming when a statistic is a young teenage girl standing before me. These girls should be

busy worrying about homecoming, the next test, or feeding their pets. However, steeped in reality, we must press forward. These girls need US!

Out of this need, a comprehensive 45 day course was developed with my passionate colleagues. In 1985, Marcia Hurt introduced women's self-defense in the Physical Education department at OPRFHS. When I was hired in 1994, I joined Marcia in teaching a comprehensive curriculum including: bullying, healthy dating relationships, dating violence and sexual assault.

The course has evolved into a required course for all freshmen girls. I believe the success is steeped not only in the need for this class, but the relationships that instructors build with their students. Due to the well-developed curriculum, new teachers are able to take the content and begin by building a safe space in their classrooms to create an ideal learning environment. It also sets the stage for many girls to confide in a trusted adult in the building to get the help she needs.

I'm amazed by the impact step back instructors have on girls at OPRFHS.

It's a privilege to empower our young women, to help them heal, to keep them safe and aide them in growing into warriors.

Testimony of: Leonard Ingram, PhD
President/Founder
The Chicago Anger Institute/House of Ra Mentoring Program

The role that mis-managed anger (rage) plays as the underlying factor fueling the majority of incidents of Domestic Violence across the entire spectrum of human relationships and the need to make anger management and conflict resolution training/skills an integral part of public education as a means of wide-spread intervention of future episodes of domestic violence in people adult relationships, workplace and community. The need, I submit, is most urgent.

Testimony of: Janel Bishop
Student Intervention Director
Oak Park and River Forest High School

I am Janel Bishop, a Student Intervention Director/Dean of Students here at Oak Park and River Forest High School. I have had the pleasure of experiencing the direct impact of the Self-Defense/Step Back program here at our school. I have been a guest speaker of the Self-Defense portion of the program for the last few years.

During these occasions I have spoken to the young women about my role here in the building as an advocate for them, about where to go when they don't feel emotionally or physically safe, and about how the school responds to bullying and harassment.

This program thoroughly covers self-esteem awareness, bullying, healthy relationships, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, coping mechanisms, among other topics. This program educates and builds awareness about these topics in a way that is not done through any other curriculum in our building, to my knowledge.

If we did not have such a program, I would be very concerned that our students would not have the exposure they need to this information in order to be well-informed young people, able to identify when something is not right in their peer relationships and feel empowered enough to speak up about it and know who to go to when they need help.

The program has a direct impact on the work that I do because students, after being exposed to the information, are more knowledgeable and feel encouraged to report incidents that they previously either didn't realize should or could be reported or didn't feel courageous enough to do so.

The impact has been so immediate that students have often come up to their teachers or to another adult they trusted at the end of a particular session to report that they have been bullied or are in an unhealthy relationship.

We have even had a number of students come to report something about a friend of theirs. This makes such a difference in the work that I do because so many incidents go unreported which results in many students suffering alone.

Receiving the information directly from victims or their friends allows me to proceed in my work to help put a stop to whatever is happening to them and provide them with the support they need.

This is definitely a curriculum that all high schools should have access to because as educators, we owe it to our students to educate them not only about what is in their textbooks but also about how to live a safe, healthy emotional life as a teen, equipping them with skills they will use for a lifetime.

We often speak of those lifetime skills we want students to have when it comes to being able to read and write and make informed decisions and be productive contributors to society.

But, how can our young people really contribute to society at their fullest potential if they are not also emotionally healthy?

This program increases the chances of having more students who are not only academically prepared but emotionally prepared for real world as well.

Thank you.

**Testimony of: Charlie Stoops, Dean
Graduate School of Social Work
Dominican University
& Co-founder
Center for Advancing Domestic Peace**

I want to thank the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force for this opportunity to testify on a topic I have spent the majority of my social work career addressing – The eradication of domestic violence. In 1993, I was trained at Sarah’s Inn here in Oak Park to provide intervention services to men who use violence in intimate partner relationships.

Over the 20 years since then, I have been involved in direct service delivery, the development of state standards for Partner Abuse Intervention Programs, and co-founded the Center for Advancing Domestic Peace, a community-based provider of domestic violence intervention services.

I have also collaborated in the development of a comprehensive bio psychosocial assessment for men who batter for the Cook County Social Services Department and in research on the effectiveness of intervention programs for men who batter in Cook County.

What I can tell you from my years of experience is that our interventions post arrest for abusive & violent behaviors will never eradicate domestic violence or even significantly reduce its devastating impact on the victims, their families and our communities.

What I do believe is that school based violence prevention programs, like the Step Back Violence Prevention Program developed by Sarah’s Inn, are essential to the eradication of domestic violence and other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors.

Adults who have completed their mandated services at the Center for Advancing Domestic Peace have consistently said in exit and research interviews that they needed a program that addressed how to have healthy nonviolent relationships when they were younger.

As preliminary evaluation data on the Step Back Program shows, a comprehensive prevention program that is required of ALL students – young men and women - reduces incidents of all forms of violent and disruptive behavior within the school – namely it fosters not only individual change but a cultural shift within the institution.

In my role as a social work educator and administrator, I believe that the guidance of PhD trained social work practitioners, like those in the Graduate School of Social Work at Dominican University, are a crucial component for “scaling up” a local program designed for a particular school context to one adaptable to varying contexts throughout Illinois. This will assure the fidelity of program implementation and subsequent reduction in violent and abusive behaviors desired.

With access to academic databases, a graduate school of social work faculty can assist in assuring that the prevention program is theoretically grounded, methodologically sound, and evidence driven.

With years of teaching and training experience, social work faculty can assist both in developing and delivering effective training programs for the local school prevention teams.

During implementation, social work faculty can provide technical support and guidance. And certainly critical, a PhD trained social work faculty can develop the sophisticated program evaluation components needed to assess the effectiveness of the multiple components of a multisite prevention program.

This would include process and outcome evaluations at a student, administrative and school-wide level with ability to combine results regionally and state-wide.

With coordination of other PhD level faculty in other graduate and undergraduate programs like Education, Library and Information Science, Sociology, Criminology and Psychology, the quality of a sophisticated statewide prevention program can be assured and the potential for the reductions in violent and abusive behavior sought will be more likely assured. Thank You

Testimony of: Charity Strong
Student perspective of Self-Defense/Step Back

In self-defense class, I was able to express myself in a way I didn't feel empowered to at first. I feel more comfortable showing you how I expressed myself through this poem.

Her uterus carried a blessing
Wedlock
A mistake
He tuckered her face
Clawed her shell
And stoned her heart
Her blood was watery
Licked the tips of her previous scars
Left them wet
With ripe red droplets
She just wanted the clench of his fist to ease away
He made dingy blemishes through her skin
Carved a pattern in her skull
As he hauled her edged twists out
Tampered her body
A Flawless flow of her blood gushed down
He was her companion, lover, soul mate
Made her form glass tears
Cutting the skin on her face
He cheered, "I hope it's dead too"

Cursed that night with darkness
He killed her blessing
Murder.

This class taught me that no matter what, it's not my, or my friends, fault, that whatever happened, happened. It taught me how to help other girls when things like this happen. Self Defense is a way many girls can speak and actually be listened to because no one is judging you.

Testimony of Rahasad Singletary
Physical Education Teacher
Oak Park and River Forest High School

Apprehensive and curious teenager boys from all walks of life crowd into a room excited to begin their first year of physical education in high school. “Can we play basketball?” “Why are we meeting in this classroom?” or “Is this an all boy’s class?” are just a few of the questions that come my way as the bell has rung to start class. Knowing the truth to all these questions and the reactions that I will get once they are answered I calmly reply “no there will not be any basketball this quarter, this classroom is where you will spend six of the nine weeks of the class and yes these are all your brothers for the first semester no girls. Now slightly confused and even more curious on what course they have been enrolled into, we all begin to explore Step Back.

Year after year that I have taught this course of self-defense it never changes that these young 13 and 14 year old boys are only aware of one way of defending themselves. In this hyper masculine culture, full of gender roles and stereotypes, these young men, for the most part, only see, hear and read about men being physical and not displaying emotion unless it is anger. The students one after the other recite the same answers each class as we fill out our trap in the box activity, where the boys explain how they think U.S. culture expects them to behave. It is an eye opening experience not only the students but me as well as the students begin to realize how impossible it is to conform or submit to all these roles and stereotypes. This activity is just the icebreaker into what we dive into as we break down the mental, physical and emotion ways of defending oneself.

Through this course I have built some great relationships with my students as they share their personal experiences with me. Building a rapport with my students is a must in this course so that they feel comfortable sharing these experiences. Being able to see my students in the hallway each day and saying “what’s up” “how’s life” or giving a high five creates an environment of trust and likeness between me and my students. Creating that element of trust goes a long way in the students opening up more in their journals and more importantly in classroom discussions. Watching the develop of the students themselves and their confidence becomes more and more evident as students begin to back each other up and open up about things that previously they would keep to themselves in fear of how they would be perceived.

Creating this foundation with our freshmen boys creates a better environment not only in the classroom, but in the school and also in the student's lives as well.

Testimony of Siobhan Doherty

OPRF Student

Perspective of self-defense student:

Hello, and good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, today I will be telling you a little bit about my experience in self-defense. Self-defense was my favorite gym class I have taken, and definitely the most useful and rewarding.

In the class you learn many techniques for defending yourself, but also how to avoid a physical confrontation altogether. Not only do I feel safer walking home from friends' houses when it's dark but the emotional side of the class was worthwhile as well.

The first few days everyone was a bit shy and only a couple people opened up during the discussions, but with the help of the teacher and as time went on everyone in the class got to be really comfortable with each other and very trusting.

The bonds I have with the teacher and the girls that were in that class are still just as strong today as they were during the semester. I personally got a lot out of the class especially when we were talking about self-image and self-confidence.

Last year I was struggling a lot with depression which, as a teenage girl only makes your body image worse. With the help of the class I was able to talk about it and get help without feeling awkward or helpless, but rather I felt better about myself and was comfortable enough with the issue to say, "wow, maybe I do need a little help with this."

The class is very confidential, but also stresses that there is nothing wrong with needing help, and gives plenty of outlets to get that help. I know of at least three other of my friends who had issues with either an unhealthy relationship, or difficulty coping with something that happened in the past that also found comfort, advice, and closure through the help of the Self-defense course.

Another topic we talked a lot about was domestic abuse. Abuse isn't limited to just physical or verbal abuse. It can be emotional, and can be much more subtle than you think. The class opened my eyes to a lot of things that have happened to me or my friends that if they were to have continued would have been counted as abuse and I found it really shocking how common and un-talked about these things were. Self-defense also talked about some of the things that sex ed. didn't go into detail with, like the emotional side of having a sexual relationship with someone. I feel much more prepared for these experiences with another adult to talk to as well as more information under my belt.

Self-defense was a very self-empowering class which is great because a lot of things that get taught to women and girls are that they need a man to come save them, which is quite false actually and this class did a really good job of stressing the importance of taking care of yourself and not having guilt about terminating a toxic relationship whether it be with a friend or romantic interest. You don't owe anybody an explanation for taking care of your own well-being and that point was really brought home during the class, which I really appreciated because it's nice to hear someone tell you that you as an individual are important and special and worth taking care of.

I highly recommend that this class get listed as an option in other schools because it would be amazing to have more girls have these skills and thoughts about themselves outside of just OPRF. As well as being useful, this class was also pretty fun, and I think many other young women would enjoy it as well. Thank you for your time, and enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

Testimony of: Clay Reagan

Division Head-Physical Education/Driver Education

Testimony regarding Oak Park and River Forest Step Back Program

In an age where bullying, aggression and sexual violence are an everyday appearance on the news this class is a must for all school districts throughout the state.

Our step back program concentrates on truly serving our students at OPRF. Our curriculum is a continually evolving curriculum based on the needs of our students and the changing events in our community.

We are not naïve to think Oak Park and River Forest students share the same needs as other students in towns throughout the state.

We also know that from class to class the needs may be different. Our teachers have worked to create curriculum and resources that can adapt to the needs of our specific students and classes. That is part of what makes our program so successful.

The second piece is our teachers. Our teachers have taken great pride in our step back program and are continually looking at education's best practices to shape our program. Teachers are excited to collaborate and discuss their classes each day.

Our new teachers are eager to get involved. The curriculum that has been created allows us to bring new teachers in and plug them right into the class. Adding new teachers also adds new perspectives and experiences. As OPRF moves forward all of our new teachers will be asked to take on at least one section of this class. This is a great way for them to truly understand our students, school and community.

I have talked about our program and our teachers; now let me talk about what I do. Well, it's simple, SUPPORT. I provide support to our teachers in the form of gathering resource, providing

them time to collaborate and listening to their ideas, concerns and beliefs. Quality teachers make this program fly, just as any program in any school.

As the Division Head my job is easy when it comes to our step back program. I make sure positive, quality teachers are teaching the class and provide those teachers with the necessary resource to accompany their teaching.

**Testimony of Yesenia Maldonado, LCSW, ICDVP
(Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professional)
Director of Programs “Between Friends”**

Thank you for the opportunity to join this discussion. I come to you from the audience listening to all of the wonderful work happening at Oak Park River Forest High School, I come as a mother of a preteen son and a teenager daughter and as a professional with 20 years of experience providing prevention programming in Illinois.

As Chris mentioned, I am the Director of Programs at Between Friends an organization dedicated to building a community without domestic violence. I appreciate how this effort embodies the importance of building the core elements of a community without domestic violence by engaging teachers, students, school personnel, with professionals in the community to provide a comprehensive approach to prevention work in IL.

Since 1995, Between Friends has operated its REACH or Relationship Education a Choice for Hope teen dating violence prevention program. This program has worked with over 77,000 students, teachers, and parents.

What we know is that we need a community and multi-faceted approach for prevention work to be successful. Matching the needs of a school with a prevention program that follows core elements is essential to this process.

I am sure the Step Up program meets some or if all of these core elements or standards, but so do other programs within the Illinois. I am part of the program development committee and building this framework is what we hope to provide.

We live in a state that is mandating our schools to provide programming to teachers and our students in grades 7-12 on teen dating violence prevention.

What we have heard today is a high school version of this work and that our young people are already experiencing these types of relationships.

We need to find out about building a framework where we explore what is happening across this state and match up effect programming with schools and not rest in thinking one program or delivery method is the only one to base our framework for the state.

Testimony of Jeff Aranowski
Illinois State Board of Education
Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) was asked to provide testimony to the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force (the “Task Force”) with respect to existing peer-to-peer violence prevention requirements for Illinois public schools.

This testimony will focus on those items that are explicitly required in law or administrative regulations. Non-binding and/or optional programs or initiatives are not included as part of this testimony.

The Task Force should be advised that the following list of requirements may not be exhaustive.

A. Policy on Teen Dating Violence [105 ILCS 110/3.10]. Districts must adopt a policy on teen dating violence that:

1. States that teen dating violence is unacceptable and prohibited and that each student has the right to a safe learning environment.
2. Incorporates age-appropriate education about teen dating violence in new or existing training programs for students in grades 7 through 12 and school employees.
3. Establishes procedures for the manner in which employees of a school are to respond to incidents of teen dating violence that take place at the school, on school grounds, at school-sponsored activities, or in vehicles used for school-provided transportation.
4. Identifies by job title the school officials who are responsible for receiving reports related to teen dating violence.
5. Notifies students and parents of the teen dating violence policy adopted by the board.

B. Sexual Abuse/Assault Awareness [105 ILCS 110/3]. Age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education is required in grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

C. Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution [105 ILCS 5/27-23.4]. School districts shall provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution education for grades kindergarten through 12 and may include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein. School districts may give regular school credit for satisfactory completion by the student of such courses. Such instruction must include:

1. The consequences of violent behavior.
2. The causes of violent reactions to conflict.
3. Nonviolent conflict resolution techniques.

4. The relationship between drugs, alcohol and violence.

This curriculum requirement is applicable only if funded sufficiently through private or federal funds. Funds are not available and, hence, this provision is not currently being monitored for compliance.

D. Sexual Intimidation and Harassment [23 IAC 200.50 (f)]. No student shall be subjected to sexual intimidation or harassment by any school employee, by other students, or by the effect of any school policy or practice.

E. Bullying Prevention [105 ILCS 5/27-23.7]. Each district must adopt a bullying policy that is communicated annually to parents and students, and is updated every two (2) years. Such updates must be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education. "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

F. ROE Teacher Institutes [105 ILCS 5/3-11]. Teachers institutes shall include teacher training committed to (i) peer counseling programs and other anti-violence and conflict resolution programs, including without limitation programs for preventing at risk students from committing violent acts.

G. Warning Signs of Suicidal Behavior [105 ILCS 5/10-22.39 (b)]. In addition to other topics at in-service training programs, school guidance counselors, teachers, school social workers, and other school personnel who work with pupils in grades 7 through 12 shall be trained to identify the warning signs of mental illness and suicidal behavior in adolescents and teens and shall be taught appropriate intervention and referral techniques.

H. Domestic and Sexual Violence In-Service [105 ILCS 5/10-22.39 (d)]. At least once every 2 years, an in-service training program for school personnel who work with pupils must be conducted by persons with expertise in domestic and sexual violence and the needs of expectant and parenting youth and shall include training concerning (i) communicating with and listening to youth victims of domestic or sexual violence and expectant and parenting youth, (ii) connecting youth victims of domestic or sexual violence and expectant and parenting youth to appropriate in-school services and other agencies, programs, and services as needed, and (iii) implementing the school district's policies, procedures, and protocols with regard to such youth, including confidentiality. At a minimum, school personnel must be trained to understand, provide information and referrals, and address

issues pertaining to youth who are parents, expectant parents, or victims of domestic or sexual violence.

I. Chicago Public Schools Violence Prevention Hotline [105 ILCS 5/34-21.8]. Must be answered, monitored and staffed by the Chicago Police Department. The purpose of the hot line is to allow for anonymous calls to help prevent violence.

J. School Counseling Services [105 ILCS 5/10-22.24b]. School counseling services in the public schools may be provided by school counselors as defined in Section 10-22.24a. School counseling services include but are not limited to: (1) educational planning; (2) career development and counseling; (3) college counseling; (4) developing and facilitating anti-violence education or conflict resolution programs, or both; (5) providing crisis intervention programs within the school setting; (6) making appropriate referrals to outside agencies; (7) interpreting achievement, career, and vocational test information; (8) developing individual career plans for all students; (9) providing individual and small group counseling; (10) addressing the developmental needs of students by designing curricula for classroom counseling and guidance; (11) consulting and counseling with parents for the academic, career, and personal success of their children; (12) facilitating school to work transition programs; and (13) supervising school counseling interns enrolled in school counseling programs that meet the standards of the State Board of Education. Nothing in this Section prohibits other qualified professionals, including other certificated school personnel, from providing those services listed in this Section.

K. School Psychological Services [105 ILCS 5/14-9.01.1]. In the public schools, school psychological services provided by qualified specialists who hold Type 73 School Service Personnel Certificates endorsed for school psychology issued by the State Teacher Certification Board may include, but are not limited to: (i) administration and interpretation of psychological and educational evaluations; (ii) developing school-based prevention programs, including violence prevention programs; (iii) counseling with students, parents, and teachers on educational and mental health issues; (iv) acting as liaisons between public schools and community agencies; (v) evaluating program effectiveness; (vi) providing crisis intervention within the school setting; (vii) helping teachers, parents, and others involved in the educational process to provide optimum teaching and learning conditions for all students; (viii) supervising school psychologist interns enrolled in school psychology programs that meet the standards established by the State Board of Education; and (ix) screening of school enrollments to identify children who should be referred for individual study. Nothing in this Section prohibits other qualified professionals from providing those services listed for which they are appropriately trained.

L. School Social Work Services [105 ILCS 5/14-9.01.2]. School social work services may include, among other items: developing and implementing school-based prevention programs, including mediation and violence prevention, implementing social and emotional education programs and services, and establishing and implementing bullying prevention and intervention programs.

The extent to which any of the aforementioned provisions may apply to a particular district or school depends upon a number of factors. Further, districts and schools may meet relevant provisions in a number of ways and through a variety of resources.

We thank you for allowing ISBE to participate in this hearing and in the Task Force's work. We value the core mission of the group and appreciate the work you have before you. We welcome any questions, comments or recommendations. Contact information for relevant ISBE personnel is listed below.

Nicki Bazer, General Counsel
Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force Member
Illinois State Board of Education
100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 14-300
Chicago, Illinois 60601
Phone: (312) 814-2223
Email: nbazer@isbe.net

Jeffrey A. Aranowski, Division Supervisor
Public School Recognition
Illinois State Board of Education
100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 14-300
Chicago, Illinois 60601
Phone: (312) 814-2223
Email: jaranows@isbe.net

**Testimony of: Chris Ledbetter
Teacher, Oak Park and River Forest High School**

My name is Chris Ledbetter and I am a teacher in the Physical Education Division at Oak Park River Forest High School. I have had the pleasure of teaching the "Step Back" class as part of the freshmen curriculum for the past few years. I have been involved with the step back program since its inception and was involved in discussions and meetings on the development of the curriculum. The first two years that the class was offered at the high school, I taught the class with Chris Ptak. Chris is an employee of Sarah's Inn here in Oak Park and was the driving force behind the curriculum development that is currently in place. I started teaching the class without Chris last year and most recently had three sections of self-defense (Step Back) that I taught daily.

The self-defense class that is offered here at the high school has been a highly rewarding class for me to teach. I find that I am challenged daily by my students to come up with the most creative and interesting ways to deliver the material that is being presented. While I taught this class alone on a daily basis, I often relied on experts to guide my instruction and delivery of information to my students. The class offers students a unique opportunity to be exposed to information that is not

currently a part of most comprehensive high school curriculums. The topics presented in the self-defense class are:

- Identifying dangerous male stereotypes
- Gender roles
- Dating violence
- Bullying
- Unhealthy dating relationships
- Sexual and Domestic Violence

As a teacher and a coach for the past 17 years, I feel that a comprehensive Violence reduction class is a necessity in any high school setting. The topics that are presented and covered in this class are things that each and every high school student has either encountered or has expressed that they know someone currently experiencing them.

Teenage bullying, dating violence, and identifying with dangerous male stereotypes are common place in all high schools both locally and nationally. There is countless documentation to support my position that violence prevention is something that is often overlooked when determining the social and emotional needs of high school aged children. The reality is that teenagers are facing the same problems at the high school level no matter the demographics of the particular student body where that re enrolled.

The need for the class is something that I feel very strongly about, but the matter in which the class is taught daily by the teachers at the particular high school where the class is offered. I am fully supportive of a collaborative effort on the part of the school and private agencies, but feel the class should be directed by the teachers. I have seen firsthand how the positive relationships between the teacher and students have allowed this class to succeed at OPRFHS.

The cornerstone of the program's success will be in the environment in which it is taught. Students, who feel comfortable with the teacher, trust the confidentiality of the group will be much more open to class discussions that address the real problems that these students are experiencing.

Testimony of: Jeremy Gaines
Student, Oak Park and River Forest High School

In this step back class I was enrolled in we learned about various topics, such as bullying, dangerous male stereotypes, and unhealthy relationship.

These are just some of the things that I found useful in everyday life that I learned in class. A big part of this class was bullying and identifying when it is happening.

Bullying has been happening a lot more often in high school and aggressive behavior is starting to result more from bullying occurring. We spent a lot of time learning to identify when it is happening and what to do when we see it.

Also, we learned the basics of self-defense; I found this to be very useful. When a kid has been bullied for a long period of time, and it escalates to physical contact, step back is a great thing to learn when trying to just defend yourself.

We watched a video in class one day, where a man who was an average male was approached by another male in an aggressive manner, and the man who was being approached used simple self defense mechanisms to defend himself.

These are the same self defense mechanisms that we learned in the step back class. Step back is used only for self-defense, and is not intended to harm anyone, only to defend yourself. Step back is a great way to defend yourself without severely harming the offender.

This class does not just teach you how to react when you are being bullied; it teaches you how to help other kids when they are being bullied as well. And that is why I value this class so much. This step back class is overall a great class and taught me a lot of life lessons that I use today.

**Testimony of: Rachael Telleen
Parent, Oak Park and River Forest High School**

I am the mother of a sophomore daughter attending OPRFS. Last year she participated in the Self-Defense class and I have only positive things to share about it. My daughter has struggled with depression for a large part of her young life. This was her first opportunity in a school setting to hear that other girls her own age do not have lives as perfect as she had imagined.

Yes – she loved learning how to defend herself and practicing her newly developed skills on the policeman. This part of the class definitely helped her feel empowered - knowing she has the skills to defend herself if necessary.

However being able to talking openly and in a supportive environment about eating disorders, depression, self-harming behaviors was probably the most beneficial experience for her. My daughter was surprised to hear that “popular” girls have experienced their own difficulties. Her teacher provided an environment that allowed the girls to share their experiences in an open and honest way, without being concerned that girls would make fun of her for what she had shared.

While developing math and English skills are important, it is also important for our kids to develop self-esteem and confidence if they are to succeed in life. Many girls struggle with this, and as a parent, I would like to see this be included as a part of the school curriculum.

As a parent I do everything I can to build my children's confidence and self-esteem, however, I am their mom. Of course I'm going to think they are great!

But hearing feedback from peers is just as critical. Hearing that other kids face problems in our school and across the country, knowing they are not alone can make a huge difference. If a program in the school can support and encourage this development, I am 100% in support.

I can't tell you how many times my daughter came home from school to share what they had done or talked about in class that day. While she doesn't dislike any of her classed, I can't say that she is eager to give me an update like she did in this class.

Last week I happened to get together with a group of mom's that formed when our daughters were Daisy's in girl scouts. I asked them if their daughters had has a positive experience in the class like mine. Overwhelmingly the response was yes.

I would strongly encourage you to make it possible for all kids to benefit from this fabulous curriculum.

**Testimony of: Amy Abbott Pappageorge
Parent, Oak Park and River Forest High School**

I am deeply indebted to OPRFHS and Sarah's Inn for the actions they take to prevent violence, sexual harassment, bullying and other forms of inappropriate behavior. They make it their business to bring empowerment and leadership training to all of the students.

Our three daughters attended OPRFHS. What is remarkable to me is the sensitivity and courage they feel about showing respect for others and for demanding that respect from their fellows. How different it was for me as a girl. I shudder to remember the things I suffered and witnessed in an era when young woman and men tolerated the intolerable. We did not have the vocabulary, the tools, nor the courage to tackle the rough and tumble of sexual harassment, date violence, bullying.

But here at OPRFHS, teachers and counselors collaborate with support agencies like Sarah's Inn and the R.A.D. Systems to offer the Step Back program that comprehensively and effectively empowers students to take action to prevent violence and harm. The format of this curriculum, the long term engagement with the students, its research-based content, its ability to foster a bond of trust between the teachers, trainers, advocates and students - all of this allows the instruction and training to reach deep into the hearts and minds of the students.

Advocates in the field of violence prevention know that students require in-depth engagement in a safe and supportive setting. Time and trust, a reputable and tested curriculum, along with the expertise of trained counselors and educators, allow the students to develop strong and positive ways to address conflict, abuse, and other threatening situations. In the end, this education makes students accountable, not just for their own actions, but for those of their peers.

I do wish to note the effect on the school culture and the larger community. Students, after completing this program, have a higher commitment to keeping their interactions positive and healthy. They assume accountability for not just their own behavior; they also look out for each other. By assuming the role of the *active* bystander, they do not stand silent when another student is at risk. The safety and welfare of everyone is front and center. It is one thing for a teacher to demand respectable behavior; it is quite another for a fellow student to call out a peer and make him or her stop the harassment. As a parent, I witnessed this. My daughters shared stories calling attention to their own power and the power of the collective to effect change and make a difference.

As a high school teacher, my husband has colleagues at many other schools. He knows of no other program that holds a candle to the Step Back program. He knows that every student at every school stands to benefit from this kind of comprehensive education. The legislation, however, is not yet in place, nor the funding to properly implement this kind of comprehensive program.

Examine the costs of physical harm, broken homes, suicide, destroyed marriages... all the havoc that violence and harassment perpetuate on the innocent.

What if much of this wreckage could be avoided by giving our youth the support, knowledge and sensitivity they need to build life-affirming relationships?

What could be more important than equipping students with the skills, understandings and behaviors that make them honorable and kind in their relationships?

I leave you with a Native American saying, "Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I'll understand."

May we make it possible for students everywhere to understand.

May our schools and institutions empower our youth to be agents of change and part of the movement to make our communities safe for everyone.

Testimony of: Regina Topf
Oak Park and River Forest High School

I feel compelled to share why this class was so important to me as a new teacher.

I started at OPRFHS in fall of 2009 when I was suffering from my own depression. It was watching Linda teach this class that I gained the strength to help myself.

I also learned about domestic violence so explicitly that I was able to identify my friend's bad-relationship for 5 years in our teens as abusive.

She was then able to label that relationship and move on. After teaching the class for 4 years, each semester never ceases to amaze me. While times can be difficult, empowering the teenage girls is most important.

As a teacher I am able to create an environment that my students feel comfortable sharing their inner battles with the class as a way to help their peers. For instance, I had a student today confess that she was sexually assaulted at age 12.

And another girl 5th period talked about her sexual assault experience.

It takes time to develop the relationships with the girls, so a 10 week class is needed to reach them.

Training, support, and resources for the teacher who teach this material is very important. Without the proper training or moral support, I would not be able to do what I do.

Thank you.

**Testimony of: Kathleen O'Brien
Parent, Oak Park and River Forest High School**

Hello, my name is Katie O'Brien and my daughter Colleen graduated from OPRF High School this past June. Today, she is a freshman at DePaul University and loves living in Lincoln Park.

We moved to Oak Park two years ago from a small town in Iowa, my hometown of Keokuk, and were immediately impressed with the high school.

When I attended my first School Open House I was thrilled to hear a number of teacher's comment that they were currently in their dream job. We quickly found out that Colleen was in an environment where there is a strong passion for learning, and a commitment to diversity.

But mostly what stands out as a highlight from our move from small town to big city (Colleen left a school of a graduating class of around 150 to join her 2013 OPRF class of over 1500)...

So what stood out...was the fact that in Oak Park and similarly at OPRF there is a place for everyone to find their spot – where they are comfortable and can find fit in – free to share opinions, make friends, express creativity and be safe.

So when Ms Carlson contacted me to present testimony today – my reply to her was an enthusiastic **YES!**

One of the places Colleen found to express herself and her creativity **was in** Ms. Carlson's Self Defense class –as a SILC leader –helping other students. Colleen was, as a SILC leader - a teacher's assistant working with Ms. Carlson and her P.E. class of ninth and tenth graders. First quarter she

helped Ms. Carlson with swim lessons (Colleen is a lifeguard and swim instructor) and second quarter she helped with the Self Defense class.

So, as a parent I got to hear fun stories about the girls not wanting to get their hair wet during swim class and of other girls trying to get the courage to let go of the side of the pool and to put their faces in the water. It was also great to hear my child share one of her AHA moments – Colleen mentioned it was a sharp contrast – when she realized one person’s fun like swimming could be another person’s worst fear – like drowning. She had put herself in someone else’s shoes – and it gave her a broader life perspective.

But the stories definitely got more interesting once self- defense classes started. At the start I did not realize the scope of the self -defense classes – in my mind it was the video clip of the class where people are on blue gym floor mat learning how to flip an attacker down to the ground.

Colleen taught me the class is much more.

I believe the class 1-teaches students respect for self and others.2-helps students gain skills in open communications and provides an opportunity for frank conversations

And 3- the class gives students the tools for safety that are vital for healthy living.

I’d like to share a few stories of how those three things translate into the real world, how they positively impacted Colleen’s life:

Teaches students respect for self and others.

Our family had a blast retelling one of Colleen’s favorite stories from Ms. Carlson class. Colleen stands up in the front of the group sitting around the living room and puts her shoulders back – enacting the persona of a teacher – telling everyone “these are your goods” while scanning her hand across all body parts - and you get to decide if the “store is closed”. She also shared Ms. Carlson’s advice on trusting your instincts and believing in yourself – to tell someone when they have crossed body boundaries that are not ok.

The next story on belief #2 how the class

Helps students gain skills in open communications and provides an opportunity for frank conversations is very personal.

Colleen was bullied her freshman and sophomore year in high school. One of the reasons we moved to Oak Park was for her safety. Colleen stood up to a girl who had been bullying her. She was assaulted by the girl; she hit Colleen in the face with a bottle and shattered her nose. It was an awful situation –one that took months to recover, both physically and emotionally. Colleen and our family have become stronger from the situation –it was not easy and it has been a long road.

Through the self defense class –she has been able to share her story with other girls – on the impact of ACTIONS. How to talk through problems, have open communications and frank conversations – with parents, with teachers, with each others, their peer groups.

Colleen told me that a 9th grade girl from self -defense class had approached her during school lunch –asking to talk, to work through a problem. That is one simple, easy way that the self -defense class has helped – peer-to-peer, open communications and frank conversations.

And yes, for belief #3

the class did give Colleen the tools for safety, and teach her precautions that are vital. She would show us in the living room her stomp the foot and the scrape the shin techniques she had learned during class. No one wanted to volunteer for that skit.

The three things that I have stated that I believe the class teaches

1-teaches students respect for self and others.

2-helps students gain skills in open communications and provides an opportunity for frank conversations

And

3- gives students the tools for safety that are vital for healthy living.

Are life skills –like swimming. They should be taught in every school – big city or small town.

They will help every student in many ways.

**Testimony of: Sarah Schriber
Coordinator of Prevent School Violence Illinois**

On behalf of the Prevent School Violence Illinois coalition, I support, without reservation, the recommendation that, to be most effective, the prevention of domestic violence, and all violence prevention efforts, must be done through a framework composed of a number of critical components through which the content, contextualized to the unique school community in which the prevention is being implemented, is delivered.

- Specific programming divorced from other violence prevention efforts shows little efficacy over time.
- A framework provides the scaffolding for a comprehensive approach that is adaptable to the unique context of each educational level (e.g., elementary, middle or high school) and school community (e.g. rural, urban, racially homogenous, racially diverse.)

- Schools are mandated by law to provide a broad range of violence prevention education (e.g. cyber safety). A framework permits a school community to coordinate efforts and use scarce resources to provide violence prevention education effectively.

PSVI looks forward to the many opportunities there will be to work in partnership with the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force and other violence prevention efforts.

Testimony of: Dr. Bertha Buchanan
Principal CSW Career Academy of Culinary Arts

Administrator and Educator for 46 yrs., retired in 2004 and in 2008 was asked to rejoin the Chicago Public Schools to assist in opening an alternative school located on the west side of Chicago.

“In September of 1983, my sister was killed by her husband. She sister’s husband was her high school sweetheart and they had two children while they were married.”

“The family knew nothing of the level of domestic violence that was occurring in the marriage, nor did they recognize the signs. “

“It was during the trial that the family realized that there were signs, simply because they had not had any exposure to domestic violence.”

“Young people simply don’t have the courage to speak out about the negative or unhealthy relationships they are involved.”

“On the sentencing date, the judge handed down an order of 60 years with eligibility of parole in 30 years. “

“On September 9, 2013, the anniversary of my sister’s death, the judge granted my sister’s husband parole.”

“As the director of Chicago Career Academy, she not only has the students well –being to attend to, but I also inherit the parents.”

She and the staff recognize the conditions that the students come from and strive to provide the safe haven that is needed to thrive.

When people are abused, they become fearful and too often the rescue comes too late.

Domestic Violence is not limited to one place or another, but rather it’s an issue throughout the community that has to be addressed.

State Representative Camille Lilly Remarks Closing Remarks:

Camille Lilly commended the vision of Dorothy Brown Clerk of the Circuit Court.

“Domestic Violence in today’s form gives a broader definition than marital and sexual relationships.”

“The task force has broadened the definition of domestic violence and the teachers and parents need the support of this program.”

“Through this program teachers have learned to identify depression within them and assist friends to recognize domestic relationships.”

“Having teachers properly trained and passionate to the classes is the most beneficial.

“The support given and provided to the instructor and teacher are key to the success of the program.”

The school assemblies are not long term trainings, but the ongoing trainings have substance and students carry their skills on to college.

Staff training and relationship building aides in the delivery and the responding to difficult and delicate topics

Identifying core elements and best practices will be the starting point to build a program that works.

The testimony of the students who continue to use the tools from the Step Back Program should become the best practices

Dorothy Brown Clerk of the Circuit Court Closing Remarks:

Good Afternoon. I thank everyone here for attending today’s Public Hearing for the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task. Your input is very important to this process and we appreciate your participation.

I thank Superintendent **Steven Isoye** for allowing this Public Hearing to take place here in Oak Park & River Forest School District 200.

And, I expressly thank **Rep. Camille Lilly**, co-chair of the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force, and our moderator **Mr. Chris Ptak**, Prevention Program Director, Sarah’s Inn, and co-chair of the Eradicate Domestic Violence Task Force.

I also wish to acknowledge my staff who are diligently working on this initiative: **Ms. Enza Raineri**, Associate Clerk of the Criminal Bureau, **Ms. Doree McGregor**, Criminal Division, and Public Information staff members, **Ms. Treana Johnson** and **Ms. Catrina Patton**.

I sincerely appreciate the students who gave testimony today. That was a brave and thoughtful gesture on your part. I am also grateful to the parents, teachers, school administrators and experts in domestic violence prevention who are helping us in the effort to develop a statewide prevention program aimed at adolescent violence.

I join all of you in your concern about ending domestic violence by reaching our youth at an impressionable age and teaching them how to prevent interpersonal adolescent violence.

I personally believe that when we equip young people with life skills to manage conflict, we can eradicate domestic violence as we know it. It's simple: if we know better, we do better.

I am very happy to be the administrator of this process. I want to see this project through to its full implementation in our schools. Domestic violence is a devastating problem that cuts across all socio-economic, racial and gender lines, and age groups. The detrimental effects of domestic violence are far reaching and long lasting.

An early intervention program that aims to prevent domestic violence is the best way to tackle this issue. The Eradicate Domestic Violence Task is charged with finding the best, sustainable, school program for accomplishing this crucial goal. We are glad to have such an effective model as the Step Back program to consider.

I thank Governor Quinn for signing the bill to create this Task Force, and I thank everyone involved for bringing us closer to eradicating domestic violence, once and for all.

Hearing Adjourned at 3:45 p.m.