

**VERMONT SEXUAL VIOLENCE
PREVENTION TASK FORCE**

2012

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

**SUMMARY OF
FINDINGS &
RECOMMENDATIONS**

VERMONT SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

2012 School Assessment

Survey Summary of Findings & Recommendations

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BACKGROUND

On February 27, 2009, the Vermont Senate and House passed S.13 — *An Act Relating to Improving Vermont’s Sexual Abuse Response System*. The legislative intent of this act—known as **Act 1**—is to increase child sexual abuse prevention efforts, enhance the investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse, and improve the supervision of sex offenders. The act includes several new mandates for Vermont schools. Act 1 requires:

- Vermont schools to include instruction about how to recognize and prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence in comprehensive health education.
- School boards to ensure that adults employed in schools in their districts receive orientation on the prevention, identification, and reporting of child sexual abuse and sexual violence.
- School boards to provide opportunities for parents, guardians, and other interested persons to receive the same information.

The **Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force (SVPTF)** is charged with providing technical assistance and materials to help school districts and supervisory unions create and implement developmentally appropriate instructional programs. See Appendix A for SVPTF history and membership.

METHODS AND GOALS

In the Spring of 2012, the Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force (SVPTF) disseminated the *2012 Sexual Violence Prevention Education School Survey*. The survey was a web link to *SurveyMonkey*. The link was sent out through email channels of SVPTF members and through the Vermont Department of Education’s (DOE) monthly field memo to health educators, “Linking Health and Learning.” Additionally, using the most up-to-date email contacts possible, the web link and cover letter were sent to principals and superintendents of all schools in Vermont.

The goal of the survey was to assess schools’ current sexual violence prevention practices to guide the SVPTF’s ongoing technical assistance and compare to baseline data collected in 2008 through a similar SVPTF-administered survey.

Who We Heard From:

- 125 individuals responded to the survey.
- **We heard from roughly 30% of Vermont’s 250 public schools.** 68 different schools were identified, though not all respondents identified their school affiliation.

- **Over 60% of the state supervisory unions and districts were represented.** 43 different supervisory unions out of a total of 63 were represented.
- The survey did not ask people to identify what grades their school included: elementary, middle, high school or some other combination.
- **The survey was completed by a variety of people within the school setting.** We heard from:
 - 42 “Counselors”
 - 21 “Principals”
 - 14 “Health Educators”
 - 10 “Nurses”
 - 6 “PE Teachers”
 - 1 “School Psychologist”
 - 1 “Teacher”
 - 1 “Social Worker”
 - 1 “Dean of Students”
 - 1 “Advocate”
 - 1 “Family Consumer Science Teacher”
 - 1 “SAP” (Student Assistance Professional)

Emergent Themes:

As members of the SVPTF reviewed the survey results, three themes emerged from the findings. The three identified themes are:

- **Theme 1: School-based Curriculum Practices**

Many of the survey questions asked about current practices with regard to actual topics covered and topics considered important to address, number of hours spent on sexual violence prevention, what the classroom education looks like, and the education/ involvement of adults in the school community. These school-based curriculum practices provide a broad-spectrum view into the current landscape of sexual violence prevention in Vermont schools, and identify gaps in knowledge, resources, and time.

- **Theme 2: Community Engagement**

Vermont has a robust network of state and community-based agencies that provide training, technical assistance, and other supports to schools in their sexual violence prevention. As evidenced by the survey responses, many schools are collaborating with these agencies in a variety of different ways. The SVPTF recommends increasing outreach efforts around the availability of these supports, as well as strengthening the capacity of these organizations to provide critical resources to school communities.

- **Theme 3: Leadership | Sustainability**

Survey responses and anecdotal evidence suggest that there is an ongoing need for leadership commitment towards sexual violence prevention, as well as practices aimed at sustaining sexual violence prevention efforts (professional development, adequate resources, and strong policy that clearly articulates goals and consequences). Furthermore,

research on sexual violence prevention indicates that high-level leadership, strong policies, and well-trained prevention practitioners are the key to effective violence prevention.

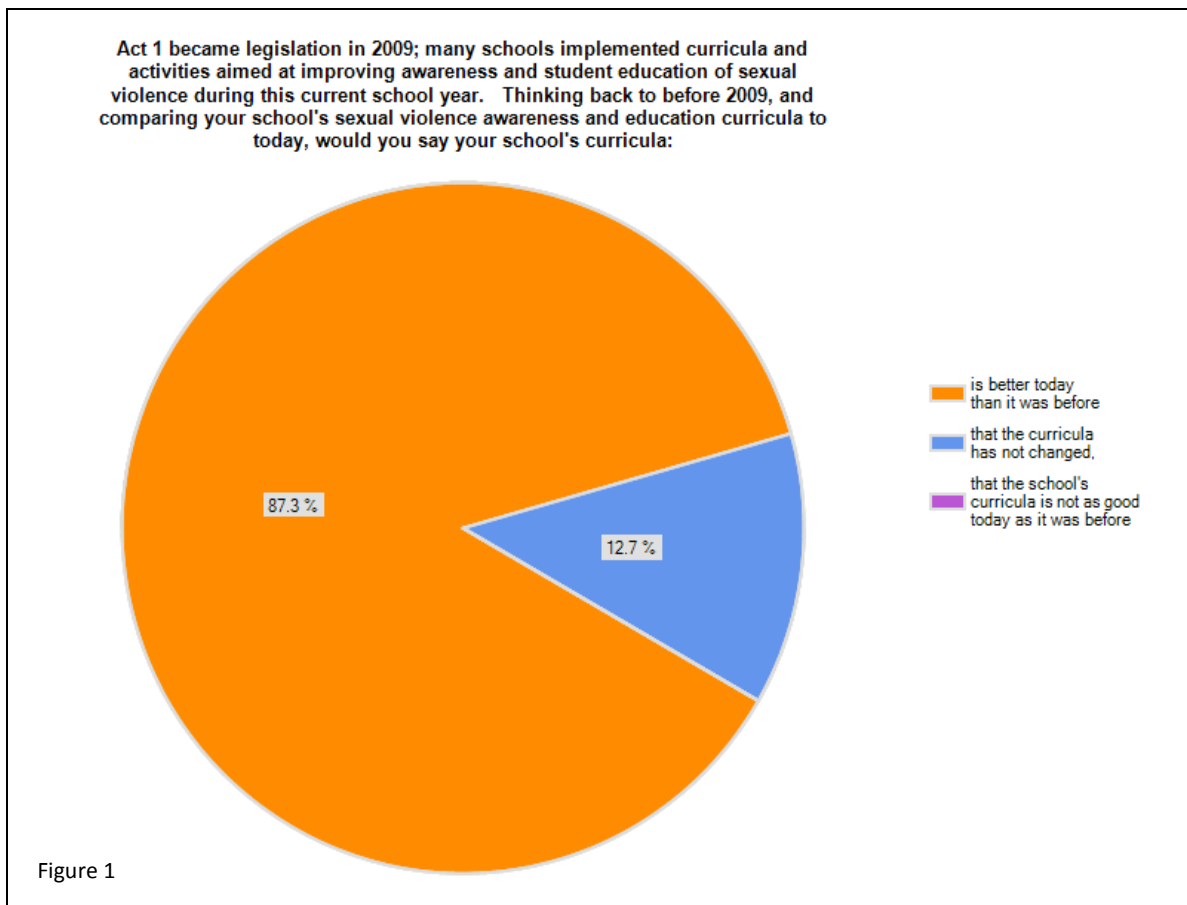
The summary of the survey findings and recommendations that follow are organized by these concepts. More importantly, these themes will help guide the technical assistance work of the SVPTF going forward over the next eighteen months of its legislative authority.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Theme 1: School-based Curriculum Practices

Celebrating our successes:

- ➔ **87% of respondents reported an improvement in their sexual violence curriculum since the passage of Act 1 and subsequent technical assistance opportunities; 0% are worse off! (SEE FIGURE 1)**



Sexual violence education core concepts: Actual versus considered important practice

- In the 2012 survey, overall, schools report that they are **providing age appropriate information** to youth.
- **Few respondents report using victim risk reduction techniques**, which are no longer considered best practice when delivered on their own.
- Respondents were asked what content is currently taught and what content respondents consider important to cover. **There was very little overlap between actual practices versus what they considered important across grade clusters.** (SEE TABLE 1)
 - Variations in the range of answers provided may indicate that **respondents consider it important to teach more** than they actually are; this is consistent across age clusters, yet is **especially true in the 7-8 and 9-12 grade ranges.**
 - In grade clusters 7-8 and 9-12, **male accountability rose to the top 5 core concepts that respondents considered important to teach**, but was in the bottom 5 of concepts they are actually practicing.
 - **For the “educators” audience, what respondents considered important aligned completely with what they reported they are actually covering.** Four priority areas were identified as being covered:
 1. Signs of child sexual abuse
 2. How bullying and harassment affect others
 3. Awareness of community resources
 4. Appropriate supervision of children

However, while these topics align, **survey results indicate that not enough time is devoted to covering them.** It is important to note, that the first item is legislatively mandated to be covered.

Table 1: Actual vs. Considered Important Practice		
Highlighted/bolded area indicates overlaps		
Group	ACTUAL: Top five* topics respondents are teaching	CONSIDERED IMPORTANT: Top five*topics respondents ranked most important to teach
Prek- k	1. Practicing communication skills 2. Identifying and communicating feelings 3. Identifying safe adults to talk to 4. When and how to ask for help 5. Developing and expressing empathy	1. Identifying personal boundaries with strangers 2. Identifying safe adults to talk to 3. Identifying boundaries for interactions with people you know

Table 1: Actual vs. Considered Important Practice

Highlighted/bolded area indicates overlaps

Group	ACTUAL: Top five* topics respondents are teaching	CONSIDERED IMPORTANT: Top five* topics respondents ranked most important to teach
1-2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and communicating feelings 2. Developing and expressing empathy 3. Identifying safe adults to talk to 4. How to respect other's boundaries 5. Identifying personal boundaries with strangers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate versus inappropriate touch 2. Identifying and communicating feelings 3. Identifying boundaries for interactions with people you know
3-4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and communicating feelings 2. Practicing communication skills 3. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affects others 4. Identifying safe adults to talk to 5. How to respects others boundaries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying boundaries with people you know 2. Practicing communication skills 3. When and how to ask for help
5-6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing communication skills 2. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affect others 3. When and how to ask for help 4. Identifying safe adults to talk to 5. Understanding internet safety 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing communication skills 2. Understanding internet safety 3. How to avoid risky situations 4. Healthy ways to express needs and emotions 5. Identifying adults to talk to
7-8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How bully, hazing and harassment affect others 2. Identifying safe adults to talk to 3. Understanding dynamics of controlling relationships 4. Healthy ways to identify and express needs and emotions 5. When and how to ask for help 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the dynamics of sexual violence in teen lives 2. What counts as consent 3. Relationship between alcohol and other drugs and sexual violence 4. Male accountability 5. Coercion and pressure
9-12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explaining how bully, hazing and harassment affects others 2. Relationship between alcohol and sexual violence 3. Understanding dynamics of controlling relationships 4. Healthy ways to identify and express needs and emotions 5. Comparing healthy versus unhealthy relationships 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male accountability 2. Coercion and pressure 6. Understanding the dynamics of sexual violence in teen lives 3. Age of consent 4. Legal definitions of sexual violence
Educators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signs of child sexual abuse 2. How bullying, hazing and harassment affect others 3. Awareness of community resources 4. Appropriate supervision of children 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signs of child sexual abuse 2. Appropriate supervision of kids 3. Awareness of comm. Resources 4. How bullying, hazing and harassment affect others
Parents/ Caregivers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How bully, hazing and harassment affect others 2. Describing signs of child abuse 3. Understanding internet safety 4. Appropriate supervision of children 5. Right to personal privacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness of community resources 2. Appropriate supervision of children 3. Describing signs of child abuse <p><i>* In some areas, five items were not statistically relevant so we have only listed 3.</i></p>

- **There is an inverse relationship between the ages that educators think it is important for students to receive sexual violence prevention information and the ages at which they are receiving that education.** In practice, more sexual violence prevention is focused on 6th grade and under, yet, respondents indicated that they consider sexual violence prevention topics to be more important for grades 7 and up.
- **What occurs in actual practice for grades 5-6 and lower grade clusters is more aligned with what is currently considered “best practice” prevention than what is covered in 7-12 grades.**
- **There is no overlap in grade clusters 7-8 or 9-12 around what respondents thought was most important to teach and the primary topics they are actually are teaching.**
- **The survey indicated that there is more education around bullying prevention than sexual harassment or sexual violence prevention.**
- Compared to the 2007 survey, the 2012 survey results demonstrate some changes in both actual practice and what is considered important. (SEE TABLES 2 AND 3)

Table 2: LONGITUDINAL COMPARISON	
Actual Practice: Most covered topics in 2007 and 2012	
<i>2007 survey most covered topics</i>	<i>2012 survey most covered topics*</i>
1. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affect others	1. Using anatomically correct names for body parts
2. Practicing communication skills	1. Practicing communication skills
3. When and how to ask for help when needed	2. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affect others
4. Understanding the right to personal privacy	2. How to ask for help when needed
5. Healthy and safe ways to identify and express needs and emotions	2. Understanding internet safety
6. Self-respect	2. Identifying and communicating feelings
7. How to avoid risky situations	2. How to respect other people’s boundaries

**Repeated numbering indicates that topics tied for placement by receiving the same score from respondents*

Table 3: LONGITUDINAL COMPARISON	
Topics considered most important to teach topics in 2007 and 2012	
<i>2007 survey most important topics</i>	<i>2012 survey most important topics*</i>
1. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affect others	1. Differentiating between appropriate and inappropriate touch
2. Practicing communication skills	2. Explaining how bullying, hazing, and harassment affect others
3. When and how to ask for help when needed	3. Comparing and contrasting healthy vs. unhealthy relationships

2007 survey most important topics	2012 survey most important topics*
4. Healthy and safe ways to identify and express needs and emotions	3. Understanding internet safety
5. Identifying personal boundaries with strangers	3. Identifying safe adults to talk with
6. Understanding internet safety	3. Describing signs of child abuse

*Repeated numbering indicates that topics tied for placement by receiving the same score from respondents.

Time spent educating students on sexual violence prevention

- The majority of respondents reported spending 1-5 hours on sexual violence prevention per grade cluster. (SEE TABLE 4)

TABLE 4: Number of classroom hours spent during the 2011-2012 school year on education issues related to sexual violence prevention				
	1-5 hours	5-10 hours	10-20 hours	More than 20 hours
Pre K- K	52%	15%	7%	3%
1-2	54%	18%	8%	2%
3-4	47%	22%	13%	1%
5-6	51%	22%	15%	5%
7-8	36%	26%	15%	13%
9-12	27%	20%	20%	2%

Use of curriculum

- The top four curricula currently used include the following. **Most of these indicate a propensity for child sexual abuse prevention vs. sexual violence in general.** These differ from survey responses in 2007. (SEE TABLE 3)

Table 5: LOGITUDINAL COMPARISON Programming used by schools in 2007 and 2012	
2007 survey top programs	2012 survey top programs
1. Kids on the Block - Vermont	1. SAFE-T
2. Local Network Anti-Domestic and/or Sexual Violence Programs	2. TECHNICOOL
3. SAFE-T	3. Michigan Model
4. DARE	4. Care for Kids
5. Care for Kids	5. Child Lures Prevention

- The majority of programs were not implemented in full.** TECHNICOOL was only implemented fully by 50% of respondents. One third of respondents reported implementing Care for Kids and SAFE-T in full. (SEE FIGURE 2)

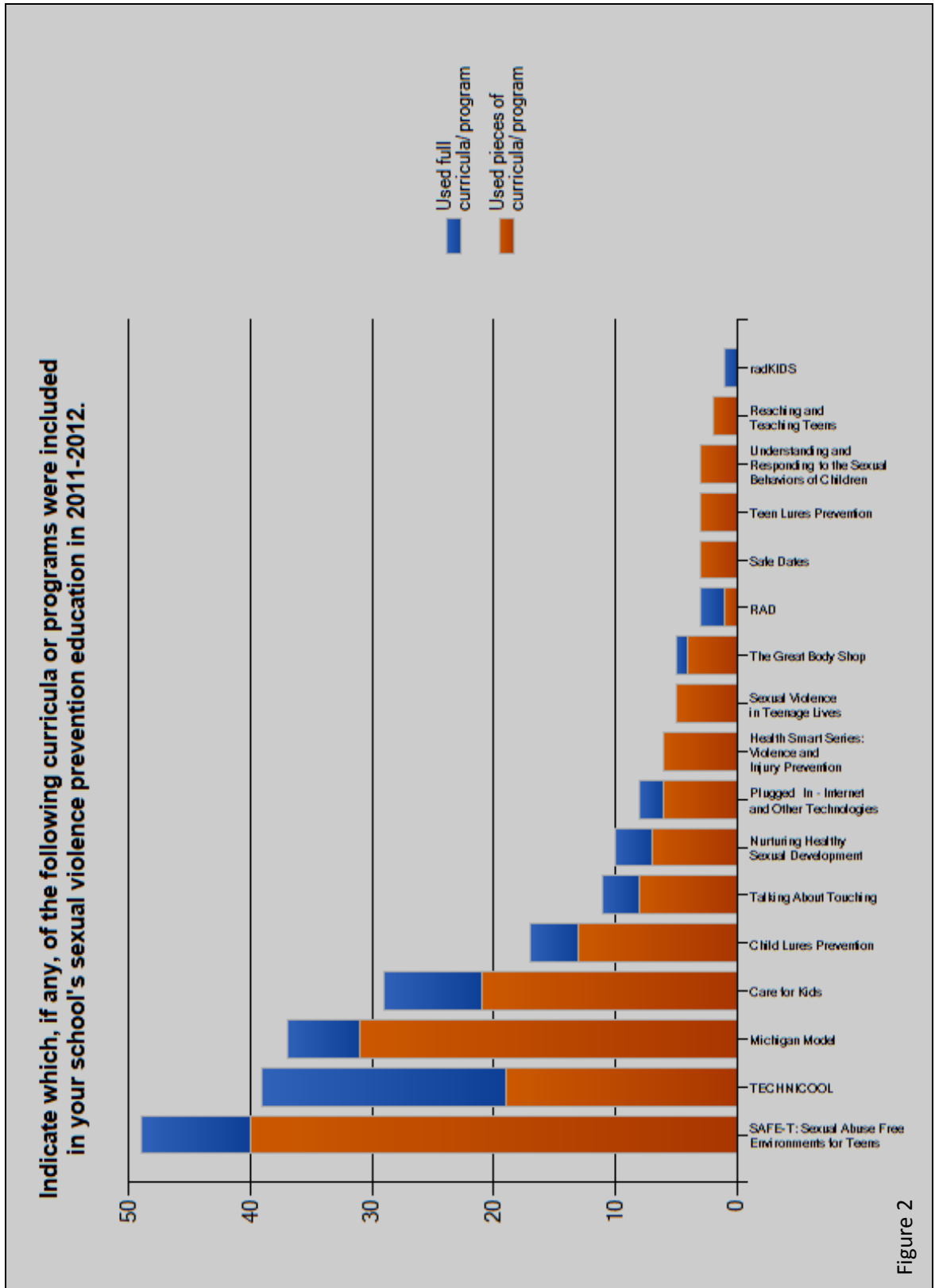
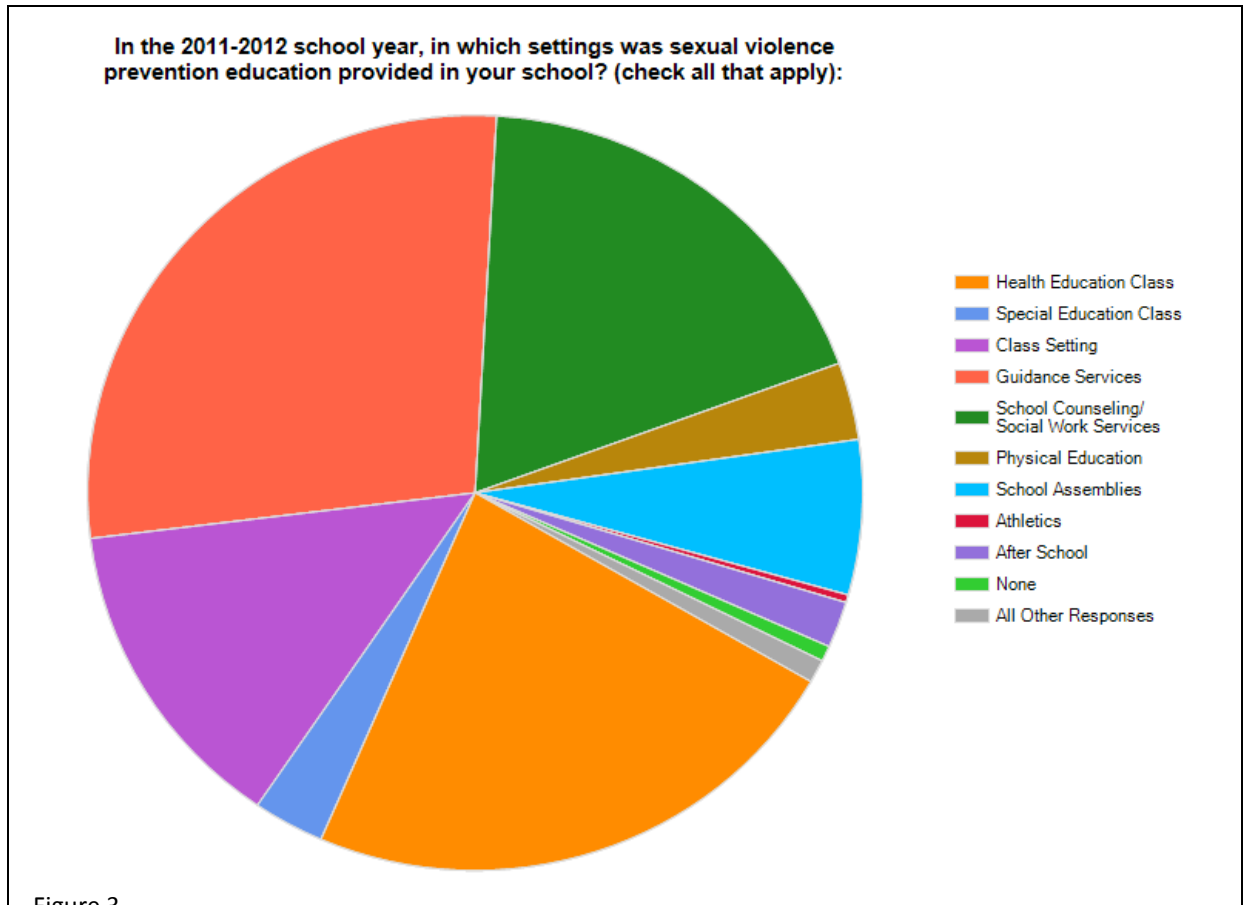


Figure 2

Where is sexual violence prevention being implemented?



- **Health Education and Guidance Services are the most common settings for sexual violence prevention information.** Act 1 mandated the inclusion in Health Education and many elementary schools conduct their health education through guidance services. (SEE FIGURE 3)
- **36% reported prevention in a classroom setting.** It is not clear from the survey which classroom settings or how it is implemented; this may correspond to the elementary level where there is often not a specific health class but more of an integration of health topics into the general classroom.
- **18% of respondents reported using school assemblies.**

Who is getting sexual violence prevention education?

- **87% of respondents reporting having educational opportunities for educators.**

- **68% of respondents report having educational opportunities for parents and caregivers.**
- Respondents reported **low use of the schools web pages (22%) or newsletters (37%) to convey information.**

Theme 2: Community Engagement

Utilization of community services

- **Many schools accessed community services to help support their school-based prevention education.**
 - **Prevent Child Abuse Vermont is well accessed, 76% of respondents reported working with this agency.**
 - **42% of respondents are working with the Department for Children and Families.** DCF is the go-to resource for mandated reporter trainings. However, they do not offer primary prevention resources and training like many other agencies listed by respondents.
 - **40% of respondents have accessed the local domestic and sexual violence direct service programs** that are members of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.
 - **The Department of Education and the Department of Health were also accessed by over 25% of the respondents.**

Knowledge and utilization of resources developed as a result of Act 1 and the SVPTF

(See Appendix B for a description of resources)

- **Respondents knew about some of the resources, but many fewer actually used the resources:** Approximately 75% of respondents are aware of the Technical Assistance Resource Guide (TARG) and the Protect Kids DCF materials; yet, only half of those who knew about these resources have actually used either of them. (SEE FIGURE 4)
- **Only half of all survey takers noted familiarity with Commit to Kids and less than one quarter indicated using it.** Knowledge of the Educational Services Agencies (ESA) trainings was low.

- **Less than 25% of respondents knew about the Consent Campaign, but of these, more than one half were using it.**

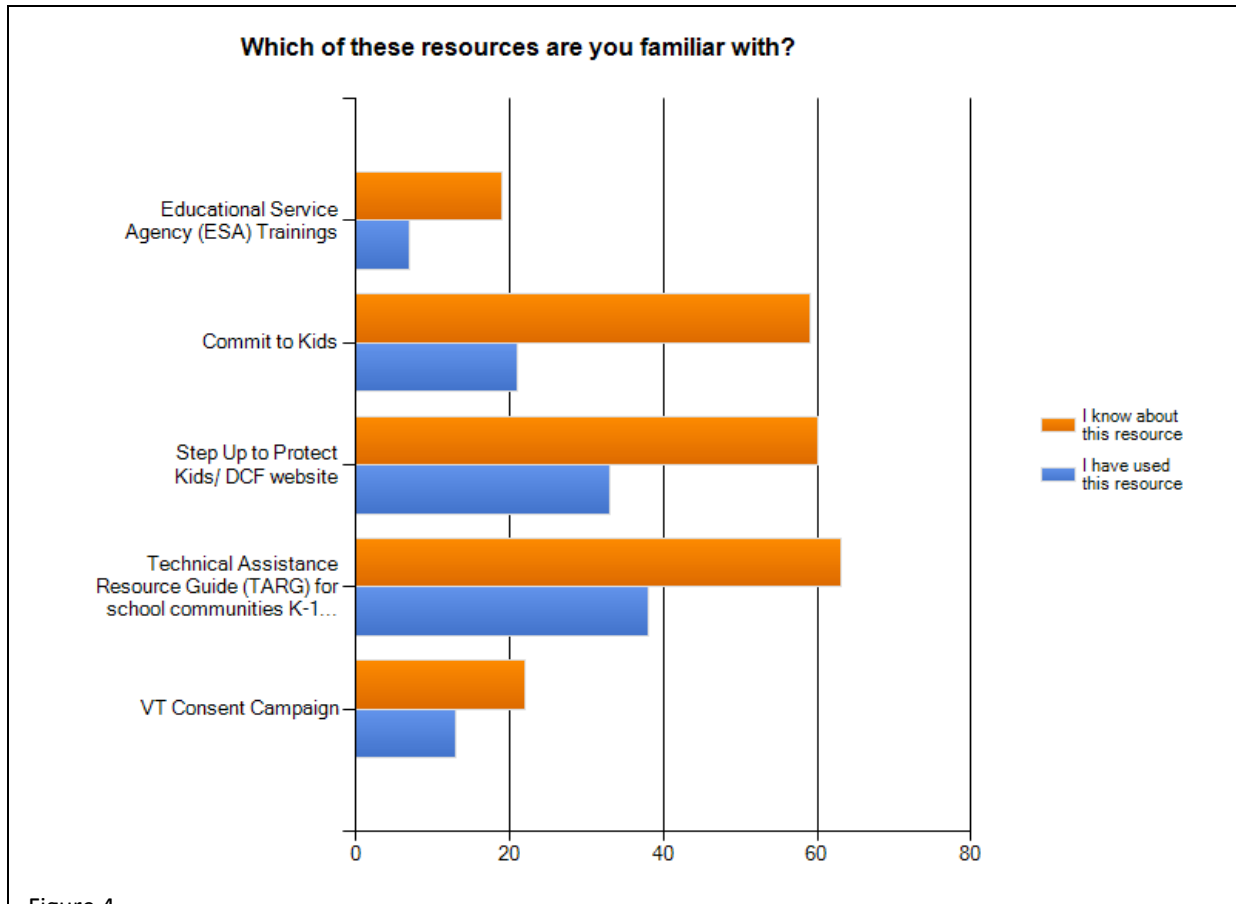


Figure 4

Theme 3: Leadership | Sustainability

Professional development

When asked what types of professional development educators would like to support their sexual violence prevention efforts, responses included:

- **Ongoing curriculum implementation support for existing curricula that adhere to the evidence-base or demonstrate promising practice.**
- **Workshops on available curricula and information on how to access those resources.**
- **Annual or biannual trainings for staff, presented by community-based agencies.**

- **Educational opportunities specifically for administrators and school boards on Act 1 mandates, sexual violence prevention broadly, and the role of the administrator/school board.**
- **Resources and education that support reaching out to and involving parents and caregivers.**
- **Continued opportunities to learn about the signs of child sexual abuse and grooming and how to respond.**

Policy and response protocols

- **Fewer than 100% of respondents reported having policies on bullying, cyber-bullying, and harassment, even though it is required by law.**
- **Only 50% of respondents reported having a response protocol for child abuse incidents.**
- **A quarter of respondents reported having a policy or responses protocol for teen dating violence and adult domestic violence.**
- **More than one half of responses noted policies or procedures around sexual assault involving peer-to-peer student interactions or adult personnel.**
- **Slightly greater than one half of all respondents reported yearly training on policies.** However, less than 10% noted that the information was included in new employee orientation materials.

ANALYSIS

The following represents a deeper analysis of the survey findings by the SVPTF:

- **There is a cultural silence and secrecy around sexuality.** When talking about sexual violence prevention with younger children, it is easier to avoid conversations about sexuality and sexual activity while still engaging in prevention. As youth become sexually active and are more likely to perpetrate violence against each other (rather than experience child sexual abuse by an adult or older child), it becomes more difficult to engage in prevention practice while maintaining culturally mandated silence on youth sexuality. Perhaps this indicates an ongoing occurrence around “victim blaming and shaming” where society often looks for faults in the victim’s behavior when talking about adult or peer perpetrated sexual violence; or perhaps this is related to a lack of resources for how to address perpetrating behavior in youth.

- **Tools are only effective if educators have the knowledge and skill to use them.** Respondents indicated that teachers did not receive enough training in sexual violence prevention. It is possible that the curricula and resources that they bring into the classroom may be ineffectively presented, even if they are based in solid prevention practices. Teachers may unknowingly undercut sexual violence prevention education messages by imposing myths or putting the responsibility for prevention in the wrong place. These educational errors can inadvertently instill shame in previously victimized students and create more barriers to victims seeking support.
- **Schools are on the right course for sexual abuse prevention education.** They are generally selecting appropriate and effective content. They also may need to reprioritize time for topics covered.
- The survey asked about bullying and harassment together, so it is difficult to discern how much focus is bullying only or harassment only. Many comments in the document indicated that many educators were focusing more on bullying alone. **While bullying prevention is of great importance, the sexual violence prevention field is concerned that a focus on bullying and harassment together leaves out a gendered analysis and/or does not fully address the dynamics and impacts of sexualized violence and sexual harassment.**
- **Curriculum and the resources that schools are using are aligned with “best practice” prevention;** however, survey results indicate that inaccurate information about sexual violence and outdated strategies are still present in some educational efforts (ex. Appropriate vs. inappropriate touch and stranger danger).
- **Schools are taking Act 1 seriously and are ensuring that educators are receiving prevention education.**
- **The education focuses mainly on child sexual abuse, as well as bullying and harassment, and focuses less on issues specific to older teens.** This may be because more respondents focused on educating younger children, or may be because of an actual gap in education.
- **Knowledge of the TARG was high but many of the survey respondents are not using it.** This may be because the SVPTF had no funding to support printing and dissemination; therefore, distribution was all online. The document is too large to easily navigate online.
- **A notable difference was found in the rates of knowledge of Act 1 supportive resources like the Educational Services Agency (ESA) trainings and Commit to Kids materials and their rates of use.** While all the resources mentioned had a higher awareness than rate of use, the ESA trainings were least known. The Commit to Kids materials had the most drastic difference between knowledge and use. The Commit to

Kids materials were only available through a CD which was sent to schools without a print version of the guidebook; this may have impacted rates of use. The ESA trainings were only hosted once in each region and no written materials were available after the training. In contrast, Step Up and the Consent Campaign were both available online and in hardcopy and the Consent Campaign was presented multiple times in geographically accessible locations. The survey results suggest that more work can be done on dissemination and encouraging use of resource materials

- **Only 50% of respondents reported having a response protocol for child abuse incidents**, which seems inconsistent with schools' required mandated reporting procedures.
- **One quarter of respondents reported having a policy or responses protocol for teen dating violence and adult domestic violence.** While this is a significant number considering there are no legal mandates around this, other schools are strongly encouraged to adopt such policies/response protocols.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme 1: School-based Curriculum Practices

The goal of sexual violence prevention is simple: to stop it from happening in the first place. However, the solutions are just as complex as the problem. Many frameworks exist for helping plan and present effective prevention; what has been found is that regardless of *what* is being presented, it will be most effective if it follows the 9 Principles of Prevention¹ created by Nation et. al, and adopted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We have framed the following recommendations using those principles to support effective sexual violence prevention programming in Vermont school communities.

COMPREHENSIVE: Strategies should include multiple components and affect multiple settings to address a wide range of risk and protective factors of the target problem.

1. Prevention activities should address a wide range of protective and risk factors. There is a need for more prevention activities focused on peer to peer perpetration, bystander engagement, and health promotion activities that address healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.

¹ Nation M., Crusto C., Wandersman A., Kumpfer K. L., Seybolt D., Morrissey Kane E. & Davino K. (2003). What Works in Prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs. *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.

2. The Department of education should make comprehensive health education a graduation requirement. With multiple competing demands, schools need the specific guidelines and time allotment to conduct comprehensive prevention strategies.
3. The Department of Education, the Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force, and other technical assistance entities should need to work to increase the understanding of best practices in sexual violence prevention education for Vermont schools as outlined in the TARG.
4. Guidance from the Department of Education and the Department for Children and Families is needed around how to conduct in-service trainings that support comprehensive sexual violence prevention education in the school and build on the Commit to Kids materials provided to schools. Topic ideas could include:
 - Outline of what comprehensive prevention education could look like (beyond curricula used with children).
 - Highlighting responsibility of all adults in the building to help create safe classrooms and hallways.
 - List of regionally specific resources and guidance on how to connect with them.
5. To be most effective, selected prevention curricula must include or be augmented with information for parents and other caregivers that support prevention activities and increase youths' likelihood of receiving clear and constant messages in multiple settings.

VARIED TEACHING METHODS: Strategies should include multiple teaching methods, including some type of active, skills-based component.

1. The SVPTF did not ask how sexual violence education is implemented, as much as what is covered; yet, we recommend schools examine their prevention practices and look for ways to increase the active, skills-based components.

SUFFICIENT DOSAGE: Participants need to be exposed to enough of the activity for it to have an effect.

1. Time spent on prevention/health promotion education must increase. Technical assistance should include information on adequate "dosage" of prevention education.
2. It would be beneficial for the SVPTF to focus on strategies for increasing administrator buy-in around prevention education, this may increase prioritization of time spent on sexual abuse/violence education in each grade cluster.

3. Prevention program designers need to consider how their curriculum or programs can be pieced out or adapted in a manner that is sensitive to the amount of time schools have available for prevention without forfeiting efficacy.

THEORY DRIVEN: Preventive strategies should have a scientific justification or logical rationale.

1. The Department of Education could:
 - Provide additional technical assistance around evidence-based curriculum adaptations and fidelity.
 - Create greater training opportunities on research based curricula that are frequently used by schools.
 - Increase availability of guidance around evidence-based and best practice curriculum selection.
2. Guidelines for trauma-informed sexual violence prevention education practices need to be identified and conveyed to both schools and community partners, particularly around the use of school assemblies. Sexual violence is a sensitive topic that may trigger a trauma response in participants (students or staff) and should be treated with extra care.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: Programs should foster strong, stable, positive relationships between children and adults.

1. Prevention educators and technical assistance providers need to provide information around resources that are readily available to disseminate to parents and other adult stakeholders; e.g. monthly paragraphs to include in their newsletter or on their website; handouts for adults in the school; letters home that include tips for how to do engage your child sexual violence prevention conversations.

APPROPRIATELY TIMED: Program activities should happen at a time (developmentally) that can have maximal impact in a participant's life.

1. More prevention activities need to target grades 7-8 and 9-12. Most prevention education is happening in the 5-6 grade cluster and focuses on feelings, communication, bullying and harassment, safe adults, and boundaries.
2. Prevention practitioners and technical assistance providers need to work to identify or create curriculum or prevention activities for the 9-12 grade cluster.

3. The SVPTF should provide resources to schools around what information is most beneficial for parents and caregivers, including age appropriate sexual development, and utilizing the DCF *Step Up to Protect Kids* online and print materials for outreach and education.

SOCIO-CULTURALLY RELEVANT: Programs should be tailored to fit within cultural beliefs and practices of specific groups as well as local community norms.

1. Resources for how to talk about and provide prevention education around male accountability in the 7-8 and 9-12 grade clusters need to be created by prevention practitioners.

OUTCOME EVALUATION: A systematic outcome evaluation is necessary to determine whether a program or strategy worked.

1. Act 1 needs to be monitored. Funding for schools for training and ongoing education and capacity building for the entire school community should be included in any mandated legislation.

WELL-TRAINED STAFF: Programs need to be implemented by staff members who are sensitive, competent, and have received sufficient training, support, and supervision. Follow up (booster) training and technical assistance to staff are critical.

1. To be successful in their efforts, schools need to provide more education and information for all educators (not just health educators) around best practice prevention, including information around how to create safe learning environments and how to respond to sexual harassment.
2. Schools are using curricula that include components of sexual violence prevention but are not specifically geared towards it. These curricula can be very useful for increasing message saturation and comprehensive education. However, it would be beneficial for the DOE to provide guidance around how these curricula do or do not address multiple components of sexual violence prevention and how they can be combined with other resources to most effectively fulfill Act 1 mandates.
3. In addition to targeting health educators, technical assistance providers and prevention educators need to target school counselors and guidance counselors in training opportunities.

Theme 2: Community Engagement

1. In order to further promote underutilized resources (Commit to Kids, Step Up materials, and the TARG), community partners need training on and access to the resources created for schools to increase school utilization and consistent messaging.
2. Ongoing training on the Act 1 mandates, available curricula and engaging parents and caregivers should be available to educators, administration, and school boards.
3. The SVPTF should provide technical assistance to community based organizations around aligning their education work with Act 1 and creating clear messages for schools.
4. There are multiple community and statewide agencies collaborating with schools to support Act 1; those entities need to look for opportunities to coordinate and collaborate in their prevention education on the community level to create consistent messages and shared resources.

Theme 3: Leadership | Sustainability

1. Act 1 planning responsibilities should be coordinated by a group of people at the district level; not one individual in the school; using the existing prevention-based teams and involving administrators.
2. The Vermont Department of Health School Health Liaisons can play a key role in helping to promote training and technical assistance resource for schools and communities in accordance with coordinated school health initiatives.
3. It is critical that state agencies (DCF, VDH, DOE) communicate with each other and coordinate the assistance they are providing schools around various prevention initiatives in schools, beyond sexual violence.
4. When the Legislature passes legislation like Act 1, where schools will reach out to community and state organizations to help fulfill the mandate, the Legislature must increase funding for these agencies to support their capacity to respond.
5. DOE/DCF should follow-up with schools regarding the discrepancy between awareness and utilization of their sexual violence resources (Commit to Kids and Step Up materials), given the significant investment that was made in developing them. Opportunities for outreach/education around these resources should continue to be created.
6. Commit to Kids needs formalized guidance on how to use the resource as part of a comprehensive prevention plan for the school.

7. Technical assistance providers need to include information on how policy and response protocols synergize with a school's comprehensive prevention plan. This should highlight specific required school policies (like bullying) and information on where to access model policies and educational assistance.
8. The State of Vermont should investigate passing teen dating violence prevention legislation that would include a policy and educational response.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. The Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force

Authority

The Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force (SVPTF) was mandated in 2006 by the passage of H856: *An Act Relating to Enhancing Sentences for and Preventing Risks Posed by Dangerous Sexual Offenders*. The legislation outlines the charge of the SVPTF:

- (a) The general assembly acknowledges that many diverse organizations in Vermont currently provide sexual violence prevention education in Vermont schools with minimal financial support from the state. In order to further the goal of comprehensive, collaborative statewide sexual violence prevention efforts, the antiviolence partnership at the University of Vermont shall convene a task force to identify opportunities for sexual violence prevention education in Vermont schools. The task force shall conduct an inventory of sexual violence prevention activities currently offered by Vermont schools and by nonprofit and other nongovernmental organizations, and shall provide information to them concerning the changes to law made by this act and concerning the consequences of sexual activity among minors.
- (b) The task force established by this section shall include representatives from:
 - (1) The Department of Education
 - (2) The Department of Health
 - (3) The Department for Children and Families
 - (4) The judiciary
 - (5) An organization which works with youthful sex offenders
 - (6) Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
 - (7) The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
 - (8) The Vermont Center for Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse.
 - (9) The Vermont Children's Alliance.
 - (10) The University of Vermont college of education and social services.

The SVPTF was expected to sunset on January 15, 2012, but its responsibilities were extended until January 15, 2014 with the 2009 passage of S13: *An Act Relating to Improving Vermont's Sexual Abuse Response System*.

Current Membership

- Center for Health and Learning
- KidSafe Collaborative of Chittenden County
- Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
- Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
- Vermont Children's Alliance
- Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

State of Vermont Departments, Serving in Advisory Capacity

- Vermont Department for Children and Families
- Vermont Department of Education
- Vermont Department of Health
- Vermont Judiciary

History

The SVPTF held its inaugural meeting in December of 2006. Members reviewed the legislative charge to the group, and considered related initiatives prioritizing the importance of sexual violence prevention. Based on the discussion and experiences of those present, all agreed that the inventory of schools and community-based agencies providing sexual violence prevention programming would be the first task and primary focus of the SVPTF's work in 2007. Additionally, dissemination of information about the change in the consent law would be incorporated into this effort through the work of the ad-hoc consent law work group.

The primary goals identified by the task force were to:

- 1) **Inventory** the sexual violence prevention programs being presented in schools
- 2) **Evaluate** what is being offered by schools in sexual violence prevention education, and Create a "toolkit" of standards, guidelines, resources and evaluation samples;
- 3) **Contribute** to the current practices and training of professionals who carry out or could carry out sexual violence prevention programs in the schools.

The school survey was completed in the 2007-2008 school year and reported to the Legislature in April 2008. This report supported and informed the creation of the Technical Assistance Resource Guide (TARG) for schools set forth in Act One of 2009. The results of the survey also reinforced the need to contribute developing a sexual consent law education effort. In response to the report of the Legislature's Pre-Kindergarten Education Study Committee Report (February 2007) and the SVPTF's own discussions, The SVPTF conducted a separate information gathering process with community early education providers in 2009 and provided the final report to the Department for Children and Families in early 2010.

After the passage of Act 1 of 2009, the SVPTF agreed that the focus of the group would need to shift primarily to the completion of the TARG a.k.a. the “prevention toolkit” already being considered by the group. The work on professional development recommendations for educators and allied professional was put on hold temporarily in order to meet the Act 1 deadlines.

The SVPTF spent the remainder of 2010 setting and beginning to implement a series of objectives for on-going technical assistance and professional development. These are aimed at assisting schools in using the TARG as a planning tool for incorporating developmentally appropriate sexual violence prevention into their health education. The SVPTF also began to plan evaluation strategies for the TARG 2011-2012 use by schools for their sexual violence prevention planning.

The ad-hoc consent law work group convened in January 2009 and continued to meet monthly outside the regular SVPTF meetings to develop a train-the-trainer module for adults and youth on consent and the consent law. This model was piloted in November of 2010 with a group of 30 adults and youth from schools and youth-serving organizations. The train-the-trainer approach and the accompanying handbooks were revised using feedback from the pilot event.

Future Work of the SVPTF: 2012-2013

Although the SVPTF was legislatively mandated, the funding from the Vermont Approach (Vermont’s sexual violence strategic plan) that supported the task force’s coordination and ongoing efforts, ended on June 30, 2011. Thus, the following projected activities to be carried out during the mandated remaining years of work will depend on the task force’s capacity to continue. The projected work of the SVPTF for the remainder of 2012 and 2013:

- Assessing the need for, planning and helping to coordinate ongoing technical assistance and professional development opportunities for the Technical Assistance Resource Guide (TARG), 2009 Act One follow-up. This survey is part of this process.
- Evaluating Vermont schools’ sexual violence prevention planning for the 2012-2013 school year and use of the TARG in that process.
- Continuing consent and consent law train-the-trainer sessions (2006 mandate).
- Resuming the review of training standards for educators and allied professionals in the area of sexual violence prevention.
- Potentially planning the annual sexual violence prevention institute for educators and allied professionals (pending funding allocation and /or existing funds).
- Supporting on-going Act 1 technical assistance.
- Recommending training standards for educators and allied professionals in the area of sexual violence prevention.
- Engaging in related sexual violence prevention education activities that emerge from the ongoing task force work.

By building on the work that the SVPTF has already begun, and enhancing and expanding the prevention education capacity of school personnel, allied professionals, community-based agencies and parents, we as a community have the potential to continue strengthening how Vermonters think about and respond proactively to sexual violence. The SVPTF looks forward to the ongoing work with colleagues and state policymakers to carry out the SVPTF mandate, the related provisions in Act 1 and the work initiated as part of the Vermont Approach.

Appendix B. Resources developed as a result of Act 1 and the 2006 charge of the SVPTF

Technical Assistance Resource Guide (TARG)

The TARG provides guidance for schools to build their capacity for and knowledge of sexual violence prevention. Created by the Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force, this document was mandated as part of Act 1 of the 2009 legislative session to improve Vermont's Sexual Abuse Response System. The development of the **TARG was completed July, 1, 2010 and made available for download on the Department of Education website.** Information to schools about its availability was coordinated with the joint Department of Education and Department for Children and Families steering committee responsible for distribution of Act 1 educational materials. The TARG can be found at:

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_health_ed/publications_resources/educ_health_ed_TARG.pdf

Educational Service Agencies (ESA) Trainings

In the fall of 2011, the Departments of Children and Families (DCF) and Education (DOE) collaborated on a series of trainings in coordination with regional Educational Service Agencies. The purpose of these trainings was to clarify the mandates of Act 1 relevant to schools, review the nine principles of prevention, highlight resources for schools to support their sexual violence prevention education, facilitate collaboration with community partners in these efforts, and assist schools to begin to develop their action plans.

Commit to Kids

Commit to Kids is a step-by-step plan to help prevent sexual abuse from happening within child-serving organizations, from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Contact Priscilla White at DCF for more information on the VT Edition: Priscilla.White@state.vt.us

Step Up to Protect Kids / DCF Website

Step Up to Protect Kids are online resources directed at parents and other adults for to protect children from child sexual abuse. It includes messages on prevention (learn the facts, plan for safety, how to talk with kids about sexual abuse), as well as information and resources on intervention and treatment. Step Up to Protect Kids can be found on the Vermont Department of Children and Families website at: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/stepup>. The complete Parent's Guide can be found at:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/protectkids/GuideforParents.pdf>

Vermont Consent Campaign

The Vermont Consent Campaign is a training curriculum for middle and high school youth and professionals on Vermont's consent law and sexual violence prevention. As a result of the Consent Campaign students and adults will have a stronger understanding and skill level around issues of healthy sexuality and consent. Students are able to restate the legal age of sexual consent, examine and apply the elements of consent, value personal responsibility to ask for and communicate about consent, identify potential consequences of sexual activity, define the elements that need to be present to be able to give or get consent, and identify when someone may not be able to reasonably give consent. The Consent Campaign was recently updated and can be found at the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence website at: <http://www.vtnetwork.org/publications/>