

## HOW TO SELECT PREVENTION PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

This table provides questions for school and community personnel to assess which violence prevention programs to consider for settings. The questions are provided with the understanding that no one prevention program or type of program will meet the needs of every setting and that different criteria will fit better in various settings. The “Considerations” section raises some of the issues behind the question, to provide a context for considering responses.

Violence prevention staff or those considering developing prevention programs may utilize the chart to understand what considerations are of importance to school and agency personnel.

<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Considerations</i></b>
Qualifications of Program staff	<p>Who delivers the Program?</p> <p>Are program staff members of professional groups with expertise in educating or counselling children?</p> <p>If not professionals, how many hours of training do they receive?</p> <p>If volunteers, how are their presentation skills and ability to connect to children monitored?</p>	<p>Program staff may have professional backgrounds and may be better trained and more comfortable with the materials since this is their primary job. They may be better able to deal with disclosures and difficult questions.</p> <p>Utilizing well-trained volunteers can lower the cost of a prevention program. The number of hours of training is important to ask and whether the volunteers have been observed providing the program to ensure that they can connect with children and cope with potentially difficult questions.</p> <p>You might ask for the presenter’s curriculum vita. In some schools, a security check is required.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> This table was prepared by Leslie M. Tutty for the Resources Implementation Sub-Committee of the Action Committee Against Violence (ACAV) Violence Prevention Project, The committee members, Doris Toy-Pries, Mary Ellen Dewar, Cathryn Bradshaw, Paul Gronnerud, Bjorn Johannson, Brad Hampton, Donna Wheatcroft, Deb Taylor and Stacy Collins provided valuable information and feedback that was used in for subsequent revisions.

<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Considerations</i></b>
Presentation Format	To what groups is the program delivered? The entire student body? Individual classrooms?	<p>Presentations to the entire student body take less time but offer less opportunity to integrate skills.</p> <p>Presentations to smaller groups offer opportunities for students to ask questions, discuss issues or practice skills, but are more time-consuming.</p>
Presentation Format	<p>What is the length of the presentation from prevention program staff?</p> <p>Is it a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-time presentation</li> <li>• several short presentations</li> <li>• intensive half-day or day</li> <li>• several days</li> </ul> <p>Is there a provision for the concept to become part of the school culture?</p>	Most violence topics are complex and potentially upsetting, especially to victims. Learning new information and skills typically requires more than a one-time presentation. Violence prevention concepts must be integrated into the policy and procedure of each school.
Presentation Format	<p>Is there a teacher-training component?</p> <p>How long is it?</p>	Teachers must deal with any disclosures or anxiety created by programs. Teachers may be faced with follow-up questions from students. Some staff will have been victims and may either be very good in handling disclosures or react emotionally to the issues.
	Is there a parent component?	Parents are an additional focus for violence prevention. They may reinforce important ideas/concepts. Unfortunately, most parent training components attract few parents. For highly sensitive topics such as sexual abuse, however, parents who are concerned have the opportunity to question program staff.

<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Considerations</i></b>
Curriculum	How does your program fit with the school curriculum and fit with the program of studies mandated by Alberta Learning?	The prevention program messages should fit with the school's curriculum. Prevention program staff should have investigated where their programs fit. Some prevention programs are mandated and can be accessed within school's own board, while other programs will add or supplement each school's violence prevention initiatives.
	What skills and/or solutions does your program teach?	Some programs merely describe the problem without providing proactive strategies that children may learn and practice.
	Does the program address issues of diversity with sensitivity?	Does the program inadvertently subscribe to stereotypes with respect to ethnic background, disability, socio-economic status, gender or sexual orientation?
	Are the materials appropriate for the developmental level of children?  How does the program/presentation differ based on the age of the students?	Some programs were developed on older age groups and revised without considering that younger children may need the material presented differently. Do program personnel seem to have an awareness of developmental issues that could affect the way in which they present their materials?
	Does the program provide additional follow-up activities or exercises?	With the complexity of anti-violence concepts, additional materials for students can encourage further conversations. Teachers must be comfortable with the information, however, or they might convey mixed messages. Students need hands-on opportunities to practice violence prevention concepts (i.e., role playing, community services projects)
Reaction to Program	What resources are in place if a student discloses abuse?	The program may provide connections to external agencies or utilize in-school resources such as counselling staff. But, this must be decided upon beforehand.
Evaluation	Has the program been evaluated?  What form did the evaluation take? i.e., student reactions? standardized measures?	Strong evaluations demonstrate changes in 1. behaviour, 2. attitudes, and 3. knowledge. Student satisfaction ratings and comments are of limited value, but better than nothing.

<b>Program Characteristics</b>	<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Considerations</i></b>
Coordination of Efforts	Does the program provide any opportunities for teachers, community, parents and/or students to work together?	Students should not be the only focus for preventing violence. Does the program suggest ways in which the school community/culture could work together to promote a climate of respect and proactive change?
Cost of Program	What are the direct costs of the program?  Are there indirect costs?	Most prevention programs have a cost attached, whether it is direct or indirect. Most programs are offered by not-for-profit organizations. The program's funding might pay for the program delivery or there may be an added cost per school or per student. Indirect costs may include any copying materials or teacher training time.
Availability	Is there a waiting list for the program?	Even if a program is excellent, if it is under-funded the cost may be that there is a long waiting list so that schools may have to wait months or even years.
Policy and Procedure	Is the program compatible with our school culture?  How do they handle incidents?  Is the program compatible and consistent to our school's position around violence prevention?	Programs promote ideas and language around violence prevention. These program attitudes must be consistent with the school's ideals, attitudes and values.