

Research Background: Sexual Assault Prevention

Insight into the Research that Informed
the Development of EVERFI's Sexual Assault
Prevention Suite

A photograph of three people in a meeting, smiling and looking at a laptop screen. The image is overlaid with a red tint. The people are in a professional setting, possibly a conference room or office. One person is pointing at the screen, and another is looking at the camera with a smile. The overall mood is positive and collaborative.

What Does it Mean to Be “Evidence- Based?”

The content and design of the courses included in the Sexual Assault Prevention Suite (SAP) is based on the most effective pedagogical strategies and theoretical approaches as identified by the body of research literature for reaching, teaching, and engaging students about sexual assault prevention. Because many of these methodologies have their own research base, we have presented several literature review articles to represent the scope of research incorporated in the courses.

SAP Content

- Comprehensive breadth and depth¹⁻³
- Based on public health and education theory¹
- Positive message framing¹
- Highlighting personal relevance¹⁻²
- Developmentally/cognitively appropriate²
- Skill-building exercises; practice opportunities²
- Empathy-building and survivor support³
- Trauma Informed
- Perpetration and bystander risk-reduction strategies³
- Discussion of gender socialization/roles³

SAP Course Delivery

- Reinforcement/expansion of previous material with new information²
- Interactive and engaging¹⁻²
- Targeted and adaptive²
- Varied teaching methods¹⁻²
- Recommendations for appropriately-timed implementation, prior to period of highest risk¹
- Use of formative, process, and outcome evaluation¹

Bystander Intervention & Social Norms

Increasingly, practitioners are utilizing bystander engagement and social norms strategies in their sexual and relationship violence prevention programming. Given the promising efficacy of bystander intervention⁴ and social norms⁵ for improving attitudes and behaviors, the SAP Suite focuses on these approaches throughout the programs.

The research literature demonstrates that norms—particularly perceptions of norms and the extent of acceptability of unhealthy behaviors and attitudes—are critical in influencing perpetrator (and bystander) behavior. Research also demonstrates that a vast majority of students (both male and female) exhibit positive/healthy attitudes and behaviors on this issue.⁶ In the SAP courses, we appeal to this positive majority to contribute to a healthy environment by acting as bystanders/interveners when problems and concerns arise. The ultimate goal is for healthy student intervention to undermine the sense among perpetrators that their peers condone their unhealthy attitudes and behaviors.

In a study of EVERFI’s online sexual assault prevention program for incoming college students, 98% of schools saw a statistically significant increase in students’ survey responses around bystander intervention ability and intent. Perceptions of social norms improved across 75% of institutions.⁷

Research Bibliography

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