

Quick-Start Guide for Designing a Targeted Violence Bystander Intervention Training

Bystander intervention is a critical component of targeted violence prevention, but few training programs focus on educating bystanders. In this quick start-guide, we summarize promising content areas and delivery mechanisms that effective targeted violence prevention programs have been using. Our goal is to help practitioners design and deploy effective bystander training that is specific to targeted violence.¹*

Bystander intervention is an action (primarily reporting) taken by individuals who witness warning signs or other indicators of potential harm to prevent or interrupt violence.²

Overview

Few research efforts have looked into how to increase bystander intervention to help prevent targeted violence. The data that exist suggest that **the most effective bystander intervention training programs feature in-person instruction (by program staff or certified trainers) that covers both recognition and concrete intervention steps** (Figure 1). However, an in-person approach may not be viable for training an entire school, organization, or community, so we provide additional promising practices in the next section.

Content Areas and Delivery Mode Options

Content areas

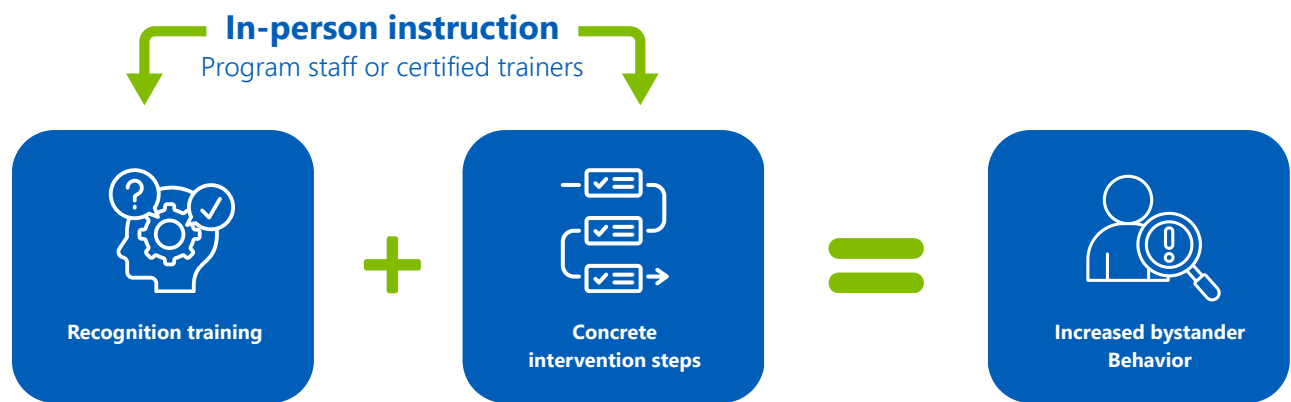
The programs we reviewed featured four key content areas. In Table 1, we define each content area, present how often the most effective programs used each one, and provide examples.

Notable observations

- **Teaching concrete intervention steps** was the most frequently taught content area in both the most and somewhat effective content areas.
- Most effective programs covered, on average, **more than two content areas**.

* For our literature review, please see our report [Bystander Intervention Training Across Contexts: Lessons for Preventing Targeted Violence](#). Learn more about our methodology in [Bystander Intervention Literature Review: Methodology](#).

Figure 1. Most effective combination of content areas and delivery modes



Source: CNA.

Table 1. What bystander programs teach

	Definition	Prevalence ^{a,b}	Example
Recognition training 	Training participants to notice warning signs or behavioral indicators and to interpret them as being related to targeted violence, suicide, or bullying	100% (n=6)	The Sandy Hook Promise Say Something curriculum teaches students what the warning signs of violence, self-harm, and threats are. ³
Concrete intervention steps 	Providing instruction on what effective bystander intervention strategies are and how to use them	100% (n=6)	The NETWASS (NETWorks Against School Shootings) program trains school staff to report concerns to a central crisis prevention appointee for a more in-depth assessment. ⁴
Awareness raising about the issue 	Raising awareness among participants about the prevalence of the issue (e.g., bullying) and its negative effects on their community	50% (n=3)	The STAC Teacher Module includes a “normative feedback module” in which participants are asked to estimate the prevalence rates of bullying; these responses are then compared to actual data and discussed. ⁵
Empathy building 	Building empathy among participants as a protective factor and as a tool for increasing the likelihood of engaging in bystander behavior	17% (n=1)	The KiVa Antibullying Program emphasizes how painful bullying can be for victims. The goal is to cultivate empathy for targeted peers and thus increase students’ likelihood of being active bystanders rather than reinforcing bullying behaviors. ⁶

^a This column presents the percentage of the most effective programs teaching each content area.

^b Some programs covered multiple content areas; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100.

Delivery modes

We identified four core effective delivery modes used by the programs we reviewed. In Table 2, we define the effective delivery modes, present how often the most effective programs used each one, and outline the key benefits and drawbacks of each option.

Notable observations

- **In-person, lecture-based instruction by program staff** was the most common among the most effective programs, and **in-person instruction by certified trainers** was the most common among the somewhat effective programs.
- However, **asynchronous virtual training** was the second-most common approach among the most effective programs, and it is more scalable and flexible.

Table 2. How bystander training is delivered

	Definition	Prevalence ^{a,b}	Benefits	Drawbacks
In person; program staff 	Primarily lecture-based delivery by the program's creators or dedicated program staff	50% (n=3)	• Very effective • Best degree of consistency across training cohorts	• Low scalability • Potentially expensive
In person; certified trainer 	Primarily lecture-based delivery by instructors certified through a train-the-trainer model	33% (n=2)	• Very effective • High degree of standardization with room to customize for specific audiences • Medium scalability	• Potentially expensive
Asynchronous virtual 	Online instruction with no real-time component; includes mobile apps, pre-recorded presentations, computer-based simulations, text messages, and social media-based training	33% (n=2)	• High scalability • Standardized across trainings • Potentially less expensive	• Not as effective as in-person training with program staff or certified trainers • Less customizable for specific community needs
Role-play or scenarios 	Primarily delivered through in-person or virtual role-play scenarios with a heavy emphasis on skills practice	17% (n=1)	• Good supplement to other forms of in-person or virtual instruction • Great for helping participants practice and build confidence in their skills	• Low scalability

^a This column presents the percentage of the most effective programs teaching each content area.

^b Some programs covered multiple content areas; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100.

References

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