

Changing Party Environments for Sexual Violence Prevention: Men as Peacemakers, Duluth, MN

Practitioners and Advocates Featured:

Ed Heisler

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Men as Peacemakers (MAP) is an organization in Duluth, Minnesota that engages individuals and communities in innovative strategies that promote gender equity and prevent sexual violence. Men As Peacemakers strategically plans each of its programs to shape social environments for prevention by not only strengthening individual knowledge and skills or promoting community education, but also educating providers and changing organizational practices and policies. Whether working with young boys in elementary schools, high-schoolers, coaches and athletes, colleges, or communities, MAP lifts up community voices and leverages local efforts for systemic change. This profile specifically focuses on how MAP is working to revamp party environments for sexual violence prevention.

RESTRUCTURING PARTY ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES

Through their BEST (Be Equal Safe and Trustworthy) Parties initiative, MAP collaborates with college students to shape party environments that promote gender equity and create a culture that supports non-violence. Ed Heisler, the co-executive director of MAP says, "To first help illustrate how environments shape norms and behavioral expectations, we ask students to imagine their favorite coffee shop and compare it to a sports bar or dance club. We ask them 'What are the organizational norms in different settings and how does



Men As Peacemakers has started a party revolution in Duluth, MN focused on creating a culture that supports gender equity and non-violence

Photo provided by Men As Peacemakers

each set different standards?” MAP then works with students to reconsider their party ‘organizational practices’ such as party themes, entry fees, music that’s played and more. For example, charging women a lower entrance fee than men, or requiring men to bring at least two women to enter a party are practices that do not support gender equity in these environments.

Applying the same model to bars and music festivals, MAP also partners with bar-owners and festival organizers to change organizational practices and promote community education for prevention. Activities include creating mandatory trainings and having venues put up messaging and posters. For example, at the Homegrown Music festival in Duluth, MAP organized specific bystander trainings that were required for festival volunteers, and created signage with messaging like ‘#nocreep.’ By collaborating with young people, MAP is able to use language that specifically resonates with their audiences. One day, MAP aspires to have trainings on sexual violence prevention tied to businesses’ liquor licenses so that every establishment serving alcohol is thinking about their environments and safety.



#NOCREEP Is an example of a party theme young people created. Photo provided by Men As Peacemakers

EDUCATING PROVIDERS TO BE PREVENTION CHAMPIONS

“By building relationships in the community, we now have champions for sexual violence prevention in the local bar and music scene in Duluth and have been able to ask individuals working in those environments to take on leadership roles through BEST,” shares Heisler. Within colleges, getting people who throw parties, residential life staff, athletic departments and others on board has been helpful in creating a culture change across campuses. MAP sees educating providers as an important part of constructing a network of critically aware community members and changing organizational practices and environments.

MAP considers Prevention Institute’s Spectrum of Prevention as it creates strategies as a way to confirm that their efforts are comprehensive. Spectrum is a systematic tool that identifies six levels of intervention and helps people move beyond the perception that prevention is merely education. While this profile features MAP’s BEST initiative, the organization addresses various levels of the Spectrum of Prevention across its projects and is a member of the Sexual Violence Prevention Network in Minnesota that is together creating a sexual violence prevention movement with help from the Spectrum.

Ed is Co-Executive Director of Men As Peacemakers (MAP), an organization dedicated to the primary prevention of sexual violence, domestic violence, and commercial sexual exploitation. Ed specializes in developing and implementing innovative community-driven strategies to promote equality and prevent gender based violence. Additionally, he has seven years of experience as a Core Trainer for A CALL TO MEN, co-facilitated batterer's intervention classes for ten years, published research on men's involvement in ending violence against women, and is a member of the 3rd Cohort of Move to End Violence.

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RESOURCES

- [Men As Peacemakers website](#)
- [BEST Party Model](#)
- [Web Conference: From Foundations to Innovations: Applying a public health approach to prevent sexual and domestic violence](#)

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