Preventing violence against women through school education

Challenging gender stereotypes, embedding positive role-modelling in schools and promoting gender equality are some of the ways the education system can help prevent gender-based violence, according to new reports from anti-domestic violence campaigners Our Watch.

Our Watch's new policy brief provides guidance tailored to policy makers on designing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring evidence-based approaches to respectful relationships education.

Drawing on international and national evidence on violence prevention in schools, the brief sets out the different roles that governments and stakeholders can play in this work.

The findings show that to be effective, respectful relationship education must take a whole-of-school approach and schools can do this by supporting staff through professional learning and having a long-term vision and commitment.

Best-practice approaches to respectful relationships education also address the drivers of gender-based violence, such as by challenging gender stereotypes

in teaching materials, through role- modelling in the school, and taking a whole-of-school approach to promoting gender equality.

Our Watch chief executive officer Patty Kinnersly said that with over 9,500 schools, four million students and 290,000 teachers across Australia, schools provide a tremendous opportunity to reach children and young people during their early development and can help shape their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behaviour around gender and respect.

"The evidence continues to show us that this education needs to be long-term and age-appropriate throughout primary and secondary school," she said.

"We need to support young people to develop skills and knowledge for what respectful and equal relationships look like, as well as transform the environments in which young people learn to ensure that they are safe."

Ms Kinnersly said it was also important to ensure that respectful relationships education goes beyond the classroom.

"Taking a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education that incorporates an in-class education while embedding gender equality in the school's culture, policies and procedures is what we know from the evidence works best," she said.

"Not only should we be embedding respectful relationships education in all schools, we must also reinforce these messages across society, so we are promoting gender equality and non- violence in all the places we spend our time."

To read the Our Watch policy brief in full visit bit.ly/3dxzZVT

Our Watch is an independent not-for- profit organisation established in 2013 by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments. Since then, all state and territory governments have joined as members.

The body is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia and works to embed gender equality and prevent violence nationally.

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au

In an emergency, call 000.

Common myths about domestic violence and the workplace

MYTH 1: Domestic and family violence doesn't have anything to do with the workplace.

REALITY: Domestic and family violence is a workplace issue. If an employee is living with, or using, domestic and family violence, it will have an impact on the workplace.

MYTH 2: There aren't any "perpetrators" or "victims" at our workplace.

REALITY: There is no "typical" or "standard" person who uses or experiences domestic and family violence.

MYTH 3: It's not that bad, he doesn't hit her.

REALITY: Violence can take many forms, and physical violence is only one of them.

MYTH 4: I don't want to get involved – it's none of my business.

REALITY: Violence is everyone's business, including workplaces. If you see it, or hear about it, it becomes your business.

MYTH 5: We aren't therapists or lawyers, there's nothing we can do.

REALITY: Human resources departments or managers can often be first responders to disclosures or revelations of domestic and family violence.

MYTH 6: Domestic and family violence only happens to [straight-cisgender] women.

REALITY: Men can be victims of domestic and family violence. However, women and gender diverse people experience domestic and family violence at rates much higher than men.

MYTH 7: If anyone at our organisation did that, we would just fire them.

REALITY: There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to perpetrators.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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