

## MISSOULA COUNTY COMMUNITY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT - FY 2025 CITY BUDGET REQUEST

FY 2025 City CVA Division and Health Department Prevention Budget							
Personnel							
Employee Name (Last, First)	Position Title	FTE	Hourly Rate (FY25)	Total Hours	Salary	Fringe	TOTAL
Ritsema, Erica	Prevention Specialist II	1	\$29.34	2080	\$61,025	\$24,410	\$85,434
Tipps, Lisa	CVA II - Crim (City)	1	\$26.13	2080	\$54,345	\$21,738	\$76,082
Nerison, Annelise	CVA II - Crim (MPD)	1	\$26.38	2080	\$54,878	\$21,951	\$76,829
						<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$238,346</b>

FY25 Fringe Rate	40.00%
Cost of living increase:	2.50%

The City of Missoula supports 2 FTE Crime Victim Advocates—one assigned to the City Attorney’s Office and one co-located with the Missoula Police Department. The County, American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding, and federal grant funds support the remaining 7 positions in the division. Sixty-five percent of clients served by the CVA Division are city residents.

The City also supports 1 FTE Prevention Specialist position in the Missoula Public Health—Health Promotion’s Division (formerly housed in CJD). In FY25 the Prevention Specialist will continue to serve Missoula’s youth through school-based educational programming, expand prevention education to other service providers such as Mountain Home, provide anti-harassment training and education to businesses and organizations, and collaborate with other Health Promotions coordinators to strengthen prevention across the individual’s lifespan.

The Community Justice Department will maintain the contract with the City of Missoula to deliver crime victim advocacy and dating and sexual violence prevention services. Staff assigned to these efforts will be assigned to both CJD and the Health Department.

*Detail and program briefs provided below.*

## COMMUNITY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Missoula County ensures public health and protects community safety through outreach, education, service, and prevention. We care for the people who live here and believe that a fair and effective justice system is foundational to a healthy and thriving community. The Missoula County Community Justice Department (CJD) works collaboratively with Missoula City and County governments, multiple state and federal departments, local justice system partners, and the community to continually improve the criminal legal system for everyone to achieve community safety in partnership with traditional public safety. The department is comprised of 26 staff members in three divisions that serve both the City of Missoula and Missoula County—Crime Victim Advocates, Court Support Services and Justice Initiatives (which includes grant acquisition and administration). We work to increase community safety, improve outcomes for those involved with the justice system, increase problem solving and collaboration across our crisis systems of care, reduce economic costs of crime to Missoula community.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY SAFETY?

[Community safety](#) is an equitable, inclusive, and multidimensional understanding of the factors that increase the security and wellbeing of people in our communities to create and strengthen healthy, resilient individuals, families, and neighborhoods. Community safety is a collective responsibility that encompasses economic and social justice (e.g., having access to attainable housing, healthy food, quality education) in addition to traditional public safety. Key partners include the criminal legal system, providers of supportive services, recovery services, and housing, as well as local non-profit organizations, service groups, and faith groups that strengthen positive social connections. Efforts to enhance community safety are designed to:

- Prevent crime and/or violence.
- Address the root causes of social issues that may increase crime-such as ensuring that everyone has their basic needs met and an equal opportunity to lead a stable life.
- Increase access to affordable and effective supportive services, mental health care, and substance use disorder treatment.
- Help people recover and heal from the impact of crime and break the cycles of trauma.
- Offer alternative models of accountability including treatment aimed at ending harmful behaviors and restorative justice.

## DEPARTMENT GOALS

- 1) Increase community safety through partnerships and programs that prevent crime, promote community health, provide rehabilitation, support crime victims, and improve the systems of care for those impacted by violence and abuse.
- 2) Ensure the effective use of resources by safely reducing the jail population, reduce failures to appear in court by defendants, and reducing court processing times through alternative programming.
- 3) Enhance collaboration and partnership by leading and supporting multi-agency partnerships and projects by convening coalitions and strategically aligning activities across the justice and crisis response systems.
- 4) Uphold the rights of survivors and defendants of crime and promote equity for people from historically marginalized and underserved communities who have been adversely affected by the justice system.
- 5) Increase resources for programs and initiatives through funding, leveraging, and technical assistance.

[CRIME VICTIM ADVOCATE DIVISION](#) supports victims of all types of crimes through the court and criminal justice system, prioritizing those who have experienced intimate partner violence and abuse. Services are free and confidential. The CVA Division serves clients in partnership with the City Attorney's Office, the County Attorney's Office, the Missoula Police Department, the Missoula County Sheriff's Office, and in Municipal, Justice, and District Court. Advocates are cross jurisdictional, serve clients in both criminal and civil matters, and follow clients through the entire life of their case to provide wrap-around services to victims of

relationship and sexual violence. Victims of these crimes can work with an integrated team of advocates who partner with criminal justice agencies to access all the services they need in one place. This structure ensures high-quality victim-centered services, improves communication in relationship and sexual violence cases between Missoula's criminal justice departments, and eliminates the duplication of services within the criminal justice system. The CVA Division evaluates services through a client feedback survey. Returned surveys show: 96% of clients felt safe in the CVA office; 96% report receiving helpful information; 97% felt that the advocate listened to them; 97% were satisfied with CVA services; 93% would return to the CVA office; and, 93% would recommend CVA services to another person. One client commented, "I couldn't have made it through my ordeal without your help." The Crime Victim Advocate Division is comprised of 9 staff members including:

- **CVA PROGRAM MANAGER** (who is an LCSW and provides administrative and clinical supervision to the advocate team).
- **3 CIVIL ADVOCATES** who provide walk-in and crisis call services and assist clients regardless of whether the victim is involved with the criminal justice system. Advocates provide crisis intervention, assistance with obtaining Orders of Protection; assistance in obtaining emergency services including shelter, transportation, and medical treatment; and provide personal advocacy including working with landlords, employers, schools, child protective services, etc.
- **5 CRIMINAL CASE ADVOCATES** serve victims of personal injury crimes, working primarily with victims of misdemeanor and felony assault, partner/family member assault, sexual assault, and sexual intercourse without consent cases within the criminal justice system. Criminal Victim Advocates initiate contact with all victims of sexual and domestic violence when an arrest is made. Advocates provide crisis intervention; victim rights information; support and accompaniment for victims during investigations, legal proceedings, and hearings; and criminal legal advocacy and victim-witness support as cases are prosecuted in coordination with the City and County Attorneys' Offices and law enforcement.
  - 1 CVA is co-located with the Missoula Police Department and specializes in services to victims of sexual violence. (This position was developed in 2015 as a part of the DOJ Settlement Agreement).
  - 2 CVAs are assigned to the City Attorney's Office which sees the highest volume of domestic violence cases.
  - 1 CVA is co-located with the Missoula County Sheriff's Office and specializes in services to rural victims of crime.
  - 1 CVA is assigned to the County Attorney's Office (which prosecutes all city and county felony level crime).

## 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

- Advocates supported 1,169 new clients and 359 returning or ongoing clients.
- Advocates helped 466 clients with civil cases, like applying for orders of protection and 1,310 with criminal cases.
- Advocates provided 19,640 services to those clients, including 752 calls, referrals, and/or informational services like accessing housing or childcare. On average, clients receive ten services. CJD staff helped file 224 temporary orders of protection, with 179 approved, and 294 permanent orders of protection, with 187 approved.
- CVA staff provided training on domestic violence-related issues to YWCA advocates; UM School of Social Work, School of Psychology, and Criminal Justice Program students; Missoula Police Department; and Missoula County Public Schools.

- Crime Victim Advocate manager provided 364 hours of clinical supervision to 7 staff members seeking licensure through the Montana Board of Behavioral Health.

The City of Missoula and Missoula County have added staffing at every level of the justice system over the past 5 years including police, prosecutors, and judges. Additionally, our population has grown and there has been an increase in reported crimes. The CVA Division has not added staff, but each advocate has increased their caseload. The Division cannot absorb more cases without additional staff members. If the division loses staff, it would explode case already high caseloads.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Advocates are co-located or assigned to the:

- Missoula Police Department
- Missoula City Attorney's Office
- Missoula County Attorney's Office
- Missoula County Sheriff's Office

Orders of protection services are provided survivors applying in:

- Municipal Court
- Justice Court
- District Court

Advocates also provide services to victims of crime in partnership with the:

- Providence Hospital's First Step Program
- University of Montana's Student Advocacy Resource Center
- YWCA Missoula
- The Center – Western Montana's LGBTQ+ Community Center
- Montana Legal Services Association
- Adult Protective Services
- Child Protective Services
- Other area social service and housing service providers

## KEY GOALS AND BENEFITS OF ADVOCACY

Crime victim advocates play a vital role in ensuring that victims receive the support, resources, and assistance they need to cope with the aftermath of crime and participate effectively in the criminal justice process. Advocates also support victim/survivors in applying for Orders of protection, also known as restraining orders or protective orders. These are legal documents issued by the court to protect victims of domestic violence from further harm or harassment by their abusers. Their primary purpose is to provide immediate legal protection and enforce boundaries between victims and perpetrators. Specifically, Crime Victim Advocate programs are designed to:

**Uphold Victims' Rights** by offering victim/survivors information about their legal rights, providing timely information about their case, explaining court procedures, ensuring that their voice is heard by the court, and offering support throughout the legal process. Advocates serve as liaisons between victim/survivors and the legal system, advocating for their interests and accompanying them to court proceedings.

**Increase Safety and Security** by assisting victim/survivors in developing safety plans tailored to their specific circumstances, helping them navigate potential risks and identify strategies to protect themselves and their children and by helping them access protective measures and support services.

**Provide Immediate Protection and Legal Resource:** Orders of protection provide victims with a legal mechanism to enforce boundaries and enhance their safety by delineating prohibited actions and imposing consequences for violations.

**Prevention of Further Harm:** Orders of protection aim to prevent further acts of violence or harassment by legally prohibiting the abuser from contacting or approaching the victim, as well as from engaging in other specified behaviors.

**Increase Access to Resources** by connecting victim/survivors with essential services and resources, such as shelters, counseling, legal assistance, and financial support, to address their immediate and long-term needs.

**Reduce Fear, Anxiety, and Uncertainty** often experienced by victim/survivors by providing information, support, and advocacy, advocates empower victims to make informed decisions and assert their rights within the legal system.

**Improved Legal Outcomes:** Victims who receive support from court-based advocates may experience improved outcomes in legal proceedings, including increased likelihood of obtaining protection orders and favorable resolutions in their cases.

**Reduce Traumatic Impacts of Violence and Reduce cycles of harm, victimization, incarceration, and generational trauma** by coordinating services among various agencies and service providers, ensuring victims receive comprehensive support and assistance across different stages of the legal process including access to services that support recovery and healing.

**Document Abuse:** Orders of protection serve as legal documentation of the abuse experienced by victims, which can be valuable evidence in criminal proceedings or family court matters.

## SERVICES/PROGRAM ELEMENTS

**Safety Planning:** Advocates assist victims in developing safety plans to protect themselves and their families from further harm. This includes obtaining protective orders, relocating to safe housing, or accessing security measures.

**Support and Empowerment:** Victims of crime often experience trauma, fear, and uncertainty. Victim advocates provide emotional support, guidance, and resources to empower victims and help them navigate the complex legal process. Additionally, when a person obtains an order of protection, the court sends a message of validation and support to victims, affirming their rights and taking their safety concerns seriously.

**Information and Education:** Advocates educate victims about their rights, options, and available services. They explain legal proceedings, answer questions, and ensure victims understand their role in the criminal justice system.

**Uphold Victims' Rights:** Advocates inform victims about their rights under the law, ensuring they understand what protections and services are available to them throughout the criminal justice process.

**Privacy and Confidentiality:** Advocates uphold victims' rights to privacy and confidentiality, ensuring that sensitive information is handled with care and only shared with authorized individuals or agencies as necessary.

**Notification:** Advocates help victims stay informed about the status of their case, including court dates, hearings, and the progress of the investigation. They ensure that victims are kept up-to-date and can participate in relevant proceedings.

**Restitution and Compensation:** Advocates help victims understand their right to seek restitution from the offender for financial losses resulting from the crime. They also assist victims in applying for compensation from state or federal programs to cover expenses related to medical care, counseling, and other needs.

**Victim Impact Statements:** Advocates support victims in preparing victim impact statements, which allow them to share the emotional, physical, and financial impact of the crime with the court during sentencing hearings. Advocates ensure that victims' voices are heard, and their perspectives considered by the judge.

**Access to Resources:** Victim advocates connect victims with essential resources such as counseling, housing assistance, medical care, and financial support. They help victims access these services to address their immediate needs and promote healing.

**Support and Accompaniment:** Advocates offer emotional support and accompany victims to court hearings, meetings with law enforcement, and other legal proceedings. They ensure that victims feel supported and are not intimidated by the process. Advocates may also serve as a voice for victims within the justice system, advocating for their rights, interests, and well-being ensuring that victims' voices are heard, and their concerns addressed.

**Navigating Legal Processes:** The criminal justice system can be overwhelming and confusing for victims. Advocates guide victims through the legal process, explaining procedures, attending court hearings with them, and helping them understand their role as witnesses.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** Victim advocates are trained to provide trauma-informed care, recognizing the impact of trauma on victims' lives and interactions. They offer compassionate and sensitive support tailored to the unique needs of each individual.

**Empowerment and Recovery:** By providing support, information, and advocacy, victim advocates empower victims to regain a sense of control over their lives, recover from trauma, and move forward on the path to healing and recovery.

**Provide Training:** Advocates provide professional training on the dynamics of intimate partner violence within the justice system to law enforcement and area service providers.

## RISKS OF REDUCING ACCESS TO ADVOCACY SERVICES:

The absence of crime victim advocates or orders of protection can have significant negative consequences for victims of crime, including increased vulnerability, underreporting of crimes, continued trauma, and decreased access to justice. It is essential to prioritize the needs and rights of victims and provide them with the support and protections necessary to help them recover and rebuild their lives in the aftermath of crime.

**Decreased Access to Justice:** Victims who do not have access to victim advocates or orders of protection may face barriers to accessing justice and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Without support and

guidance, victims may struggle to navigate legal proceedings, assert their rights, and seek appropriate remedies for the harm they have suffered.

**Increase Risk of Homicide and Decreased Accountability for People Who Cause Harm:** When crime victims do not get the support and assistance that they need, they are more likely to drop out of criminal prosecutions—leaving those cases nearly impossible to prosecute. When cases are not prosecuted, people who cause harm are more likely to continue. This leaves victims exposed to increased risk of violence, including homicide.

**Inability to Leave a Violent Relationship:** Without victim advocates, victims may lack access to crucial support services, information, and resources to help them navigate the criminal justice system and cope with the aftermath of the crime. This can leave victims feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and without the necessary assistance to address their physical, emotional, and practical needs- which are all necessary when a survivor is deciding if they can safely leave a violence relationship.

**Increased Vulnerability:** Victims who do not have access to orders of protection may remain at risk of further harm or harassment from perpetrators. Without legal safeguards in place to enforce boundaries and provide a sense of security, victims may feel powerless to protect themselves and their families, leading to ongoing fear and trauma.

**Increase in the Number of Unhoused Women and Children:** Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for victims of domestic violence. Without services and intervention from the justice system, more victims will likely end up unhoused as they flee abuse.

**Underreporting of Crimes:** Victims who do not receive adequate support and protection may be hesitant to report crimes or participate in the criminal justice process. Fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the system, and concerns about retribution from perpetrators can deter victims from seeking help, leading to underreporting of crimes and a lack of accountability for offenders.

**Continued Trauma:** Without appropriate interventions and protections, victims may experience ongoing trauma and emotional distress because of their victimization. Lack of support can exacerbate feelings of fear, helplessness, and vulnerability, prolonging the healing process and hindering victims' ability to recover and move forward with their lives.

Finally, at a state and national level, advocates have been central in changing these practices in the justice system that left people without support, safety, and hope. In addition to advocating for their clients, they advocate for important change such as victim rights laws. Defunding advocates can mean defunding progress for victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking and other crimes.

## MISSOULA PUBLIC HEALTH—HEALTH PROMOTIONS DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Healthy Relationships Project at the Missoula City-County Health Department works to promote healthy relationships and prevent relationship violence, including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and teen dating violence. We offer outreach and education to help people learn skills for having healthier relationships. We also coordinate Make your Move! Missoula, a coalition of local organizations and community members engaged in efforts to change the social norms, beliefs, and behaviors that support sexual and intimate partner violence, thus creating a safer and healthier community. FY 2023 Summary Report is attached.

### TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS OFFERED

#### YOUTH:

- **Healthy Friendships for 3rd-6th Graders:** A 30-minute lesson and activity that can be delivered in after-school programs.
- **Power Up, Speak Out! For 7th and 8th Graders:** A 5-lesson curriculum that encourages middle school students to think critically about healthy relationships, power dynamics, boundaries, and consent. Each lesson is designed to be engaging and age-appropriate.
- **Healthy Relationships and Consent for High School Students:** We offer 2, 45-50 minute lessons that can be delivered separately or during one, 90-minute block period. These lessons can also be delivered in congregate care settings.

#### ADULTS:

- **Bystander Intervention for Bars:** During this workshop for bars and other establishments that serve alcohol, staff will learn about how they can help prevent sexual violence by being positive bystanders. For more information, visit the [Make Your Move! Missoula](#) website.
- **Workplace Sexual Harassment:** This workshop helps staff understand what is ok and what's not ok in the workplace through innovative and engaging activities. This workshop is best suited for the service industry or other workplaces where dating between coworkers is common.
- **In-Service for Youth Groups and Youth-Serving Organizations:** During this 1-hour training, staff will learn about how their work already supports violence prevention as well as how to utilize teachable moments to promote social norms that protect against relationship violence.

#### MAKE YOUR MOVE! MISSOULA COALITION

Make Your Move! is an innovative campaign and coalition designed to engage allies to prevent sexual violence in the greater Missoula area. This multi-faceted, inter-agency approach creates long-term, positive change by changing the beliefs and behaviors that support sexual violence, thus creating a safer and healthier community. The coalition is comprised of community organizations and stakeholders who are committed to ending relationship violence. The coalition currently consists of members from:

- Missoula City-County Health Department
- YWCA Missoula
- UM Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC)
- Missoula Interfaith Collaborative

#### Guiding Principles:

- **Positive messaging:** Research shows that the most effective marketing messages appeal to the target audience's core values, enabling them to feel strong and capable rather than ashamed by their behavior.



- **Engaging bystanders:** People are more receptive to messages that engage them as helpers rather than potential perpetrators or victims. Sexual predators intentionally target vulnerable women and are not receptive to anti-rape messages. However, research indicates they seek the approval and validation of their friends. Those friends can help create positive outcomes.
- **Changing social norms:** Research shows that violence against women is directly linked to sexist beliefs (rape myths) and acceptance of sexual aggression from peers (i.e., a “rape supportive culture.”) All Make Your Move! initiatives attempt to shift these attitudes and beliefs while creating a new “norm” of community members actively working to prevent sexual violence.

For more information, resources, downloadable toolkits, and more, visit: [Makeyourmovemissoula.org](https://makeyourmovemissoula.org)

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

Intimate partner violence and sexual assault weren’t always seen as public health issues. As a result, prevention of these crimes developed within the battered women’s movement, often being housed with victim advocacy services. As such, Relationship Violence Services (now the Community Justice Department) had been providing grant-funded prevention services since 2009. In 2013 City Council decided to hard fund a portion of Relationship Violence Services’ prevention services in response to the Department of Justice investigation of Missoula’s handling of sexual assault. In doing so, Missoula became the first municipality in the state to support primary prevention of relationship violence through general fund dollars, ensuring on-going support for long-term change. However, prevention and healthy relationship education is most effective using public health strategies. In FY 2021 Community Justice Department and the Health Department teamed up to further strengthen Dating and Sexual Violence Prevention services in Missoula.

Over the past decade the field of dating and sexual violence prevention has evolved, moving from awareness and educational campaigns towards a true public health primary prevention model. These are exciting changes that have strengthened prevention efforts, increasing effectiveness, and linking the work to other prevention efforts that exist within our community. (As an example, the risk and protective factors for youth experiencing or perpetrating dating violence are nearly identical to the risk and protective factors for substance use disorder and suicidality.) The Health Promotions Division of the Health Department leads all other primary prevention efforts for the City and County. Further, the new Community Justice Department’s mission has also evolved to be justice system focused, rather than public health focused. Due to these reasons, CJD and the Health Department are partnered to transfer dating and sexual violence prevention efforts to the Health Department to provide the program with public health expertise and improve coordination with other prevention programming, while ensuring the program remains connected to its roots in the field of victim advocacy services.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE LONG-TERM CHANGE: HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROJECT, CRIME VICTIM ADVOCATE DIVISION, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Preventing domestic and sexual violence requires a multifaceted approach that addresses individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. In Missoula, key strategies are carried out across our community by city and county programs, as well as the YWCA Missoula, the University of Montana, and others service providers. This can only be accomplished by working together. Key strategies include:

**Education and Awareness:** Promote education and awareness campaigns to increase understanding of the dynamics, warning signs, and consequences of domestic and sexual violence. This includes educating individuals about healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, and respectful behavior.

**Bystander Intervention Training:** Provide bystander intervention training to empower individuals to recognize and safely intervene in situations where they witness potential harm or abuse.

**Support Survivors:** Ensure accessible and comprehensive support services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, including shelters, hotlines, counseling, legal assistance, and medical care.

**Decrease Risk Factors/Increase Protective Factors:** Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of someone experiencing or perpetrating domestic and sexual violence such as a history of abuse or trauma, substance abuse, mental health issues, social isolation, poverty, unemployment, and cultural or societal attitudes that condone violence. Protective factors, on the other hand, are characteristics or conditions that mitigate the risk of domestic and sexual violence and promote resilience. These can include strong social support networks, access to resources and services, healthy relationships, effective communication skills, stable employment, positive coping strategies, and supportive community environments.

**Prevention in Schools:** Integrate comprehensive sexual education and healthy relationship curricula into school programs to teach young people about consent, respect, communication, and recognizing abusive behaviors.

**Community Engagement:** Engage communities in prevention efforts through grassroots initiatives, partnerships with local organizations, faith-based groups, and community leaders, and promoting bystander intervention and social support networks.

**Address Root Causes:** Address underlying factors such as poverty, inequality, substance abuse, mental health issues, and childhood trauma that contribute to domestic and sexual violence through social and economic interventions.

**Inclusive Approaches:** Develop culturally competent, equitable, and inclusive prevention programs that respect diverse identities, cultures, and experiences, and address the unique needs of different communities.

**Empowerment Programs:** Implement programs that empower historically underserved and vulnerable populations, including women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, and people with disabilities, to assert their rights and access resources.

**Promote Gender Equality:** Address underlying social norms and inequalities that perpetuate domestic and sexual violence by promoting gender equality, challenging harmful stereotypes, and fostering respectful relationships.

**Collaboration and Coordination:** Foster collaboration and coordination among government agencies, law enforcement, healthcare providers, social services, and community stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive response to domestic and sexual violence.

**Media Literacy:** Promote media literacy and responsible media representation to challenge harmful portrayals of gender, relationships, and violence, and promote positive social norms.

**Legislation and Policy:** Advocate for and enforce laws and policies that protect against domestic and sexual violence, including criminalizing abuse, strengthening restraining orders, and promoting workplace policies that support survivors.

## OUR FOCUS: HOW HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION AND BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING PREVENTS DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION plays a crucial role in preventing domestic and sexual violence by addressing underlying attitudes, behaviors, and social norms that contribute to such violence. Here's how:

**Promotes Awareness:** Healthy relationship education raises awareness about the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, including recognizing early warning signs, understanding the cycle of abuse, and challenging common misconceptions.

**Healthy Intimacy:** Educating individuals about consent, boundaries, and healthy sexual practices promotes safe and fulfilling intimate relationships while preventing coercion, manipulation, and abuse and helps individuals recognize and reject coercive and abusive behaviors.

**Strengthens Communication Skills:** Effective communication skills are essential for expressing boundaries, concerns, and needs assertively, which can help individuals identify and address potential sources of conflict or abuse before they escalate.

**Empowers Individuals:** Healthy relationship education empowers individuals to advocate for themselves and others, enabling them to recognize abusive behaviors, seek help when needed, and support friends or loved ones who may be experiencing abuse.

**Builds Resilience:** Education on coping strategies, stress management, and emotional regulation equips individuals with the tools to navigate challenging situations and resist manipulation or coercion from potential abusers.

**Fosters Gender Equality:** By challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality, healthy relationship education addresses power imbalances and harmful stereotypes that contribute to domestic and sexual violence.

**Encourages Bystander Intervention:** Healthy relationship education encourages bystander intervention by teaching individuals how to recognize signs of abuse, safely intervene in potentially harmful situations, and support survivors.

**Provides Resources and Support:** Education on available resources, such as hotlines, shelters, and counseling services, ensures that individuals know where to turn for help if they or someone they know is experiencing domestic or sexual violence.

**Promotes Social Change:** By fostering a culture of respect, equality, and accountability, healthy relationship education contributes to broader social change efforts aimed at preventing and addressing domestic and sexual violence at both individual and systemic levels.

**Long-Term Prevention:** By equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge to build healthy, respectful relationships, healthy relationship education addresses root causes of violence and promotes long-term prevention efforts within families, schools, and communities.

**Builds Emotional Skills:** Educating individuals on conflict resolution techniques empowers them to address disagreements and conflicts in a respectful and productive manner, leading to healthier resolutions and strengthened relationships. Teaching emotional regulation skills enables individuals to manage their emotions effectively, reducing conflicts and promoting emotional intimacy and support in relationships.

**Respect and Equality:** Emphasizing the importance of respect and equality fosters relationships based on mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation, while preventing power imbalances and unhealthy dynamics.

**Promotes Empathy and Understanding:** Promoting empathy and understanding enhances individuals' ability to see situations from others' perspectives, fostering compassion and deeper connections in relationships.

**Boundary Setting:** Helping individuals establish and maintain healthy boundaries promotes self-respect and autonomy while fostering mutual respect and understanding within relationships.

**Promote Inclusive and Respectful Relationships:** Recognizing and respecting cultural differences and diversity promotes inclusive and respectful relationships that celebrate individual identities and experiences.

**Long-Term Satisfaction and Well-Being:** Ultimately, healthy relationship education aims to improve overall relationship satisfaction, reduce relationship distress, and enhance individual well-being by fostering fulfilling, supportive, and enduring connections with others.

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION training is a proactive approach to preventing domestic and sexual violence by empowering individuals to recognize and safely intervene in situations where they witness potential harm or abusive behaviors. Here's how bystander intervention training contributes to preventing domestic and sexual violence:

**Increases Awareness:** Bystander intervention training raises awareness about the signs and dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, helping individuals recognize behaviors that may indicate harm or abuse.

**Promotes Responsibility:** Training empowers individuals to take responsibility for creating safe and respectful environments by challenging harmful attitudes and behaviors, rather than remaining passive bystanders.

**Encourages Active Engagement:** Bystander intervention training encourages individuals to actively intervene when they witness potentially harmful situations, whether by directly addressing the situation, seeking help from others, or distracting the potential perpetrator.

**Provides Strategies:** Training equips individuals with a range of intervention strategies, such as distraction techniques, direct communication, or enlisting the help of others, enabling them to intervene effectively and safely in different situations.

**Builds Confidence:** By providing opportunities for practice and skill-building, bystander intervention training helps individuals develop the confidence and competence to intervene in challenging situations, even when faced with uncertainty or resistance.

**Strengthens Community Response:** Bystander intervention training fosters a culture of collective responsibility and support within communities, encouraging bystanders to work together to prevent and address instances of domestic and sexual violence.

**Reduces Opportunities to Cause Harm:** By intervening early and disrupting potentially harmful situations, bystander intervention training reduces opportunities for a person to escalate abusive behaviors or harm others.

**Supports Survivors:** Bystander intervention training emphasizes the importance of supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, both by intervening in the moment and by connecting survivors with resources and support services.

**Promotes Social Norms Change:** Bystander intervention training challenges harmful social norms and attitudes that perpetuate domestic and sexual violence, promoting more positive and respectful behaviors within communities.

**Contributes to Prevention Efforts:** By empowering bystanders to take action and create safer environments, bystander intervention training contributes to broader prevention efforts aimed at reducing rates of domestic and sexual violence and creating lasting social change.