

## **The Ramsey County Initiative for Violence Free Families and Communities**

By Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt

Ramsey County is taking a national leadership role in promoting violence free families and communities. The Initiative for Violence Free Families and Communities is a community-wide collaboration made up of over 500 individuals and 150 organizations. The vision of The Initiative is to end family and community violence in Ramsey County and beyond. The Initiative was formed by community leaders and Ramsey County and is based on the primary prevention model of raising awareness and creating resources in order to lead to positive social and individual change and action. The Initiative identifies and responds to root causes of violence, rather than waiting to pick up the pieces from the impacts of violence after it has occurred.

The mission of The Initiative is to sustain a community-wide collaboration that establishes a "no-violence" standard in the public mind. We do this by working to increase individual and organizational involvement and ownership in the prevention of family and community violence. By acting as a facilitator for diverse violence prevention strategies, The Initiative enhances community involvement and input in the continuing improvement of intervention services.

The Initiative uses two definitions of violence which guide our efforts in developing and implementing violence prevention strategies.

1. Violence Is A Misuse of Power and Authority
2. Violence Is Words and Actions That Hurt People

Members of The Initiative have implemented targeted violence prevention efforts through twelve Action Teams in our workplaces, schools, religious institutions, legislature, media, neighborhoods and communities. We have assisted in creating workplace violence prevention policies and procedures already used by over 200 businesses. We provide resources for churches, synagogues and faith communities to engage and empower them in ending all forms of family violence. Also provided to our schools are educational materials on nonviolence and conflict resolution.

The Initiative has developed a number of resources to help individuals, local communities, schools, businesses and institutions take action to prevent violence. Following is a list of some of the tools available to you:

- For Families/Homes: Refrigerator magnets with themes around peaceful parenting (Respect Children: They Are Wonderful People); "Thriving With Your Teen" booklets; "We Are A Peaceful Community" and "This is a Violence-Free, Abuse-Free Place" posters; and static stickers to designate your homes and families as peaceful.
- For Businesses: Training on creating a violence-free, respectful workplace; "What Do Great Supervisors Look Like?" booklets; and violence-free facility static stickers and posters.
- For Education and Faith Communities: A variety of posters, booklets and magnets designed for use in schools and faith communities.

We need to work together to achieve violence free families and communities. Now is the time for action. Please take advantage of the resources available through the Initiative. To request materials or learn about other ways The Initiative could partner within our community, please call my office at (651) 266-8363 or the Saint Paul - Ramsey County Department of Public Health at (651) 266-2404.

**Source: Victoria A. Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner, District 7**  
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