IMPACT CASE STUDY

Men Can Stop Rape’s Impact as a Technical Assistance Provider

Interview with Deborah Rosenbloom, Vice President of Programs & New Initiatives, Jewish Women International

Before Working with Men Can Stop Rape

Based in Washington, DC, Jewish Women International (JWI) is the leading Jewish organization working to empower women and girls by ensuring and protecting their physical safety and economic security, promoting and celebrating inter-generational leadership, and inspiring civic participation and community engagement. Inspired by their legacy of progressive women’s leadership and guided by their Jewish values, JWI works to ensure that all women and girls thrive in healthy relationships, control their financial futures and realize the full potential of their personal strength. Some years back, Deborah Rosenbloom, JWI’s Vice President of Programs & New Initiatives, convinced the JWI Board of Trustees of the need to include men, boys, and masculinity as part of the organization’s work, and in 2008 JWI developed programming specifically devoted to boys ages 12 to 14 – a three-hour curriculum called “Good Guys,” which was made available to other Jewish organizations. “Good Guys” includes a three hour curriculum that explores issues of power and control, gender, self-esteem, masculinity and relationships, helping boys understand what it means to “be a man” in Judaism, and to articulate the kind of man they want to be. In 2013, JWI’s engaging men and boys work deepened when they received a grant through the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Consolidated Youth Engaging Men (CYEM) Program. Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR), the OVW CYEM Program Engaging Men Technical Assistance (TA) Provider, began providing TA to JWI at that time.

How Men Can Stop Rape Supported JWI.

For their CYEM grant project, JWI planned on engaging men and boys in a conservative Orthodox Jewish community in Baltimore, Maryland. A MCSR staff person served as a CYEM TA point of contact (POC) for JWI. All CYEM grantees have to conduct a needs assessment and create a strategic plan as part of the initial planning phase of their grant. During this phase, JWI asked MCSR to review both documents, and the POC offered input about strategies for positively learning from and engaging men and boys in the Orthodox Jewish community to get their buy-in. Also, MCSR conducted a number of sessions about working with young men and boys at bi-annual grant program institutes during the years of the grant, all of the sessions attended by representatives from JWI.
Three people connected to JWI – Ms. Rosenbloom, another JWI staff person, and a rabbi serving as a consultant to the grant project – attended MCSR’s Healthy Masculinity Training Institute (HMTI) as an opportunity to increase their knowledge about effective strategies to engage men and boys. The HMTI is a chance to learn the theories and develop the skills that have shaped MCSR’s Healthy Masculinity Action Project (HMAP), a national initiative designed to raise the visibility of healthy masculinity and build a new generation of male leaders across the country who model non-violent, emotionally healthy masculinity, serving as positive change-makers. Through three days of discussions about theory, interactive group exercises, role-playing, and multi-media presentations, the training institute presents participants with a framework to positively construct masculinity and to motivate men’s engagement in the primary prevention of violence against girls and women.

Finally, the MCSR POC conducted a half-day training for JWI, their grantee partner, CHANA, a Baltimore domestic violence and sexual assault organization that offers a Jewish response to the needs of people who experience abuse in Northwest Baltimore City and County, and public relations professionals hired as consultants by JWI. The training consisted of MCSR’s experience creating public education campaigns for young men and boys, stressing six principles to employ, such as using positive messaging; speaking to men and boys’ best selves; developing accessible messaging for men and boys; and representing young men and boys speaking to young men and boys. During JWI’s process of creating a public education campaign for the men and boys in the Orthodox Jewish community, MCSR reviewed many of the materials.

How JWI Used Men Can Stop Rape’s Support

According to Ms. Rosenbloom, it had been JWI’s intent to adapt “Good Guys” for their grant work, although they knew it would change significantly because the grant would allow them to do more community-based, in depth programming. Early on, through input from Men Can Stop Rape, they realized “that men needed to be the leaders” of the project as a means of creating community buy-in. “If you go into a community in a negative way,” Ms. Rosenbloom said, “and say you’re [the community] patriarchal – all the things that one could say looking at many communities – you’re not going to get anywhere. Acknowledging their culture and then working with that – something we knew in other contexts – was definitely something emphasized” by MCSR. JWI hired two rabbis as project consultants who were also social workers, so they spoke both the language of the community and the language of JWI.
Because the two rabbis were “of the community,” JWI got “so much further so much faster.” They became the face of the project in the community, and JWI directed the work “from afar.” Ms. Rosenbloom stated that they “had to build a lot of trust even to hire the two rabbis as consultants.”

CHANA formed a steering committee consisting of the rabbis serving as consultants and other rabbis from the community. Everything was shared with the committee members for their input and approval. The project would not have had a presence in any synagogue without their permission, and community members would not have attended any project events and workshops without approval from the rabbis in the community. In Ms. Rosenbloom’s view, the “community buy-in was the most critical piece because nothing would have happened otherwise.”

The “Good Guys” curriculum turned into a more comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated public education campaign called “Boy to MENtsch.” The word “mentsch” means “good person” and is language familiar to the Baltimore Orthodox Jewish community. JWI was also able to emphasize “men” in the word. Similar to MCSR’s Where Do You Stand? campaign, Boy to MENtsch avoided being prescriptive by asking “How do you mentsch?” The campaign consisted of posters that showed young men and boys wearing yarmulkes and acting in good ways. Additional campaign components consisted of electronic bulletin boards, adverts on buses and in bus shelters, a radio PSA, and laminated cards with 10 tips for fathers that included Torah text.

There were workshops for fathers, a curriculum consisting of four sessions delivered in schools, and sessions for coaches and athletes – all of them integrating and developing the Boy to MENtsch campaign look, messages, and themes. Four principles that represent core values in their Holy Scripture – 1) communication without anger; 2) resolving conflict; 3) empathy; and 4) being part of a team – played central roles in the workshops and sessions. JWI thought the campaign would include social media, but it was viewed as objectionable by adults.

**Impact of Men Can Stop Rape’s Support**

According to Ms. Rosenbloom, the Boy to MENtsch campaign “was the centerpiece [of the project].” It was a means of communicating with the entire community, “and we could have made so many mistakes.” Instead, this successful campaign created opportunities for important conversations connected to Orthodox Jewish men and boys’ roles in promoting healthy relationships. It reinforced faith-based community values and skills in connection with positive, healthy masculinity and relationships. The campaign increased the level of the community’s trust in CHANA, the local domestic violence program that was a partner of the project. “What this [project] did,” according to Ms. Rosenbloom, “was get the word out to the whole community....It just reached so many people, and we heard about it from so many people [saying] that they had seen it.” This visibility opened doors to further work in the community.