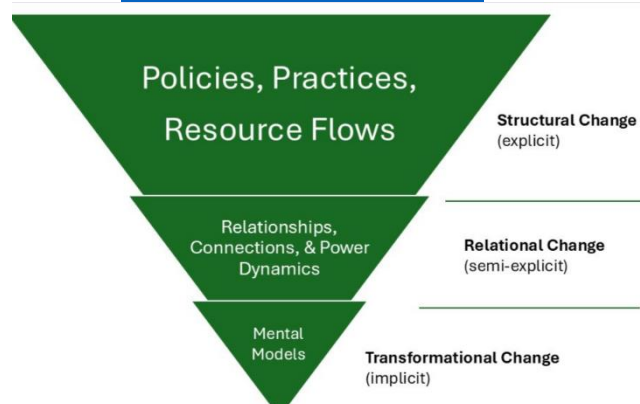


Best Practices for Systems/Culture Change and Training Approaches

According to [existing evaluations](#) of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and harassment prevention in the workplace, box-ticking, pre-packaged training programs focused solely on legal liability, and passive approaches (activities designed to share information with little engagement or explanation; e.g. posters, required videos without interactivity, shared documents requiring a sign-off, etc.) are not associated with behavior change or increased knowledge.ⁱ Instead increasing the safety of workplaces and workers requires a comprehensive, adaptive, consistent, responsive [multi-system approach](#).ⁱⁱ

Approaches to Systems Change

Source: [Reimagining Social Change](#)

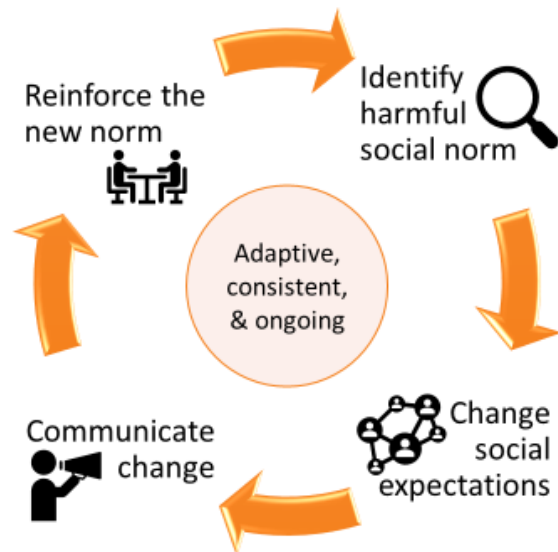


Research from [Reimagining Social Change](#) points to an approach that hinges on change at multiple levels – **addressing structural conditions** (policies, practices, and the flow of resources), **examining power and influences** (relationships, connections, and power dynamics) and **transforming mental models**

points to an approach that hinges on change at multiple levels – **addressing structural conditions** (policies, practices, and the flow of resources), **examining power and influences** (relationships, connections, and power dynamics) and **transforming mental models** (shifting deeply held beliefs and assumptions).^{iv}

Sustainable systems change only comes about when we shift the conditions, relationships, and mindset that create and perpetuate the problem; in this case, the ways that domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and harassment impact employees and workplaces. It requires updating assumptions, relationships, access to resources, and who policies and practices benefit and harm.

For systems to meaningfully change, there needs to be an ongoing, consistent, and adaptive process in place where the harmful social norm is identified, the expectation for what is appropriate workplace behavior is changed, that change is communicated and the new norm is reinforced. Critically, this process is ongoing because norms and behavioral expectations can shift based on the needs of your workforce.



Shifting Social Norms

The actions, behaviors, and beliefs people or groups adhere to based on informal and often unwritten standards rooted in existing power structures, is referred to as a social norm. Interventions that target [social norms change](#) are most effective in addressing and preventing the impacts of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and harassment in the workplace.^v Social norms change involves shifting beliefs about work, victimization, existing hierarchy, power, and ideas about how the workplace should function.^{vi}

There are multiple steps to effectively implementing [social norms change](#).^{vii} These steps require a variety of methods, tools, and interventions over multiple, distinct time periods. Identifying and defining a harmful social norm is an essential first step to developing responsive interventions. Next, through intentional engagement of all who are impacted by the existing social norm, a new expectation must be developed in order to change a harmful social norm. Finally, the changes must be effectively communicated and consistently reinforced to ensure sustainability. As external social norms shift, internal social norms should remain responsive

to continue to engage with eliminating harmful social norms and elevating social norms that promote safety.

Principles for Fostering Structural, Relational, and Transformative Change

[A 2017 review by the EEOC](#) found that the following principles were essential for effective workplace prevention.^{viii}

1. Strong commitment and engagement from senior leadership to foster a workplace free from violence and harassment;
2. Consistent and demonstrated accountability processes including regular audits and evaluations for policies, protocols, and interventions;
3. Strong and comprehensive worker-centered policies that are accessible and regularly communicated to employees;
4. Easy-to-understand, impartial, and trusted complaint procedures and regular and responsive feedback loops; and
5. Regular, interactive, in-person (where possible) trainings tailored to various employee roles and responsibilities, the nature of the work, and the workplace to ensure that all employees are familiar with company rules, policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in a code of conduct as well as the consequences for violating those expectations.

Training Development and Structure

A 2022 review of all existing data on workplace prevention found that multi-modal and systems-change strategies and approaches that target structural, relational, and transformative change are [most effective](#).^{ix} It is critical that program development and trainings are [implemented alongside](#) appropriate [changes to workplace policy](#).^x

Key points:

- Program [development must include workers](#) in the [process](#).^{xi}
- [In-person and multi-day](#) trainings are the most [engaging and effective for participants](#), and create the most buy-in for social norms change.^{xii}

- Trainings must reflect [organizational context](#) and be customized for the workers within a [specific workplace](#).^{xiii}
- Trainings should build social-emotional intelligence and cover intersecting forms of power-based violence, discrimination, and oppression.
- Training that starts with and includes [leadership](#) demonstrates an organization-wide commitment to culture change and is most effective.^{xiv}

Workplaces Respond provides technical assistance to workplace stakeholders seeking to better prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and harassment impacting the workplace. Scan this QR code to access the Resource Center.



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