

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Soteria Solutions

Prosocial Bystander Intervention Training™

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Programs
2. Prevention: Leadership Education & Skill Development
3. Prevention: Bystander Intervention Programs

Description of Work:

Purpose of Work and How it Was Done:

Soteria Solutions worked with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (National Academies) to create a customized, sustainable, and impactful prevention curriculum that focused on the themes of workplace harassment, gender-based discrimination, microaggressions, and identity-based harm at work. Establishing a workplace culture that actively acknowledges, confronts, and addresses harm or inappropriate behavior in order to counter any potential for exacerbated power imbalances at all levels is important to National Academies and their institution's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. To gather an accurate representation of the workplace culture within the National Academies, Soteria Solutions conducted focus groups, and key stakeholder interviews, and reviewed previous listening sessions provided by the National Academies staff,

Independent of Soteria Solutions' work, the National Academies launched a five-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan to review, refine, and communicate anti-harassment policies and reporting procedures for all staff. The action plan included a Toolkit for Allyship in the Workplace, reviewed by Soteria Solutions to ensure its alignment with the Prosocial Bystander Intervention Training goals. This National Academies' DEI Action Plan was created to develop strong and comprehensive policies, establish a clear and transparent reporting process that fosters trust, address responsiveness and closure, identify strategies for diffusing power, and promote enforcement and accountability. The Prosocial Bystander Intervention curriculum is intended to support leadership and staff members at all levels in shifting the culture at the National Academies by teaching bystander intervention skills and linking these prosocial behaviors to the larger DEI Action Plan.

What We Did and How it Was Done:

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This curriculum development for this program took more than a year of collaboration with members of the National Academies' Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion including the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and the Director of Workforce Diversity as well as the Director of Training and Staff Development from the Office of Human Resources and is intended for rollout to all 1,150 employees of the National Academies. The first version of the curriculum was piloted virtually with a selection of the National Academies staff from multiple pay grades representing a diverse range of voices and perspectives in the summer of 2023. Feedback from this pilot version was incorporated into an in-person training for *20+ participants, including 9 trainers with professional backgrounds in DEI content* – in December 2023 at the National Academies' Keck Center in Washington DC. This train-the-trainer format proved incredibly revealing and rewarding, leading to further train-the-trainer sessions in January 2024 where Soteria Solutions staff streamlined and edited certain activities to better reflect the realities of time management and more accurately present critical concepts. The final version of both the employee and leadership modules, along with their corresponding train-the-trainer facilitator guides were ready for rollout by February 2024.

Curriculum Development

Soteria Solutions staff were committed to creating a curriculum that would lay the foundation for all the National Academies staff members to more effectively engage with the tools and resources available to them in the DEI Action Plan. It was critical that every National Academies' staff member not only see themselves represented in the content of the training, but that leadership also engage in the same activities, scenarios, and reflections that employees in lower pay grades were expected to experience. According to public health theories of behavior change, establishing new norms and changing culture requires those in positions of power and authority to be trained in the same content as their staff. Although financial and strategic support is essential to culture change, a sustainable philosophical shift in how organizations implement and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization will require meaningful engagement, buy-in, and accountability from leadership.

Soteria Solutions and the National Academies' staff decided to develop a Leadership module that would specifically address the reporting obligations, power differentials, and structural changes that leaders must navigate, as well as empower them in furthering a culture of respect, civility, and prosocial bystander intervention. While the Leadership Module is based on the skills and scenarios presented in the employee curriculum, the content is geared toward not only clarifying their distinct reporting responsibilities, but making space for how their identities shape the levels of power and safety they experience in professional spaces.

Learning Outcomes

The Prosocial Bystander Intervention Training for National Academies workshop is designed to achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate understanding of prosocial bystander intervention;
2. Improve understanding of how staff members' identities impact how they experience and respond to harm;
3. Foundations of prosocial bystander intervention and connecting identity to our recognition of harm
4. generate authentic intervention solutions as a prosocial bystander by utilizing the N.A.S.E.M. prosocial bystander intervention acronym.

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An additional learning outcome was added for the Leadership Module:

5. Explore how power, safety, positioning, and agency interact with our identities and affect how we can be a prosocial bystander.

The curriculum for both staff and leadership is anchored in the concepts of intersectionality, power, and safety. Understanding how one's identities inform our experience of harassment and discrimination, as well as our ability to stand up to it, is a fundamental component of the training. The term "Intersectionality" was coined in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw and expanded upon by several Black Feminist academics, activists, and authors including Audre Lorde in civil and human rights movements. Intersectionality underscores the importance of occupying multiple identity-based spaces simultaneously, and the need to recognize that it is impossible to "tease out" a single identity among the constellation of identities one might hold and address the issues of only that one identity – and call it "inclusion."

A person's unique constellation of identities makes it either more or less likely that they may experience harm, presenting a unique set of opportunities and challenges that they constantly navigate due to their real or perceived safety in any space. Intersectionality is an important concept in prosocial bystander intervention because it helps us understand the complex calculus that bystanders consider when deciding whether to intervene. For instance, due to the experience a minoritized person has moving through the world, they may feel generally less safe in public – or in a team meeting – than someone who holds dominant identities. In predominantly White institutions for example, the policies, procedures, and structures that have girded the organization's operations for decades are often not conducive to affording individuals from minoritized communities the right to show up as their fully authentic selves, advocate for themselves and others, *and* thrive without facing repercussions. To be an effective prosocial bystander, it is vital to examine how these identities and proximity to power can influence whether we intervene and, if so, how to do it safely.

The skill-building exercises and scenarios in this curriculum were customized to reflect the professional situations, power dynamics, and relationships that exist across all levels at the National Academies, incorporating the program, operational, and leadership perspectives.

Scenarios went through multiple revisions and reiterations to accurately capture the experiences of harm that were expressed in the listening sessions and uncovered during the focus groups.

Each person's "lived experience" is so layered and multidimensional; our identities, values, social, and professional positioning either help or hinder us from being able to: 1) recognize a harmful situation; 2) center the needs of the person experiencing harm, and 3) positively impact a situation. Identifying and acknowledging what kinds of power we have in different situations helps us build confidence, brainstorm ideas, and intervene in ways that feel authentic to who we are. It is integral to this curriculum therefore, to create a shared understanding of harm among the National Academies employees. Creating a shared understanding of harm is an important step in shifting the narrative around what constitutes "harm and harassment" in the first place. If the National Academies employees cannot recognize a behavior as harmful (either for

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themselves or more importantly, for others,) they will not develop the tools to intervene and/ or create cultural and policy changes that facilitate more equitable environments for people whose identities are different than their own.

Current Status, Next Steps, & Evaluation:

The National Academies are currently in the process of rolling out the Prosocial Bystander Intervention curriculum to all their employees. Each of the hired facilitators are responsible for facilitating the program to various assigned groups across the National Academies with most sessions being conducted in-person and a handful being conducted virtually. All the National Academies' staff members will complete this training by September of 2024. Our partners at the National Academies are collecting evaluation data from staff members who complete the training. Soteria Solutions continues to provide technical assistance to the National Academies by meeting with facilitators to understand any challenges they face in facilitating various concepts and activities, discuss best practices, and support facilitators in strengthening skills and language surrounding program delivery.

As Soteria Solutions continues to provide technical assistance and content expertise to facilitators, we are eager to continue developing prosocial bystander intervention training that incorporates the concept of "bringing one's whole self to work." Soteria Solutions defines this as "the freedom to authentically express the identities, values, and ways of life that are fundamental to our sense of self – in any environment." It is the responsibility of organizations and institutions to create professional environments that are inclusive of the multitudes of identities and ways in which people choose to show up. Creating safeguards through policies, procedures, and structures gives employees more opportunities to thrive, and establishes an organizational-wide norm that acting against inappropriate, harmful, and discriminatory behavior is not only mandated but unanimously supported. Spaces that are psychologically and physically safe also help employees acknowledge the unique role they have in preventing identity-based and sexual harassment in the workplace while developing authentic, sustainable strategies. Ultimately, affording people the choice to bring their whole selves to work not only creates a culture of prosocial bystander intervention in the workplace, but supports organizations in retaining talent, innovating and expanding beyond the status quo, ensuring financial health and economic security for its employees, and fostering long-term culture change.

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