



April 17, 2021

The **Alaska School Activities Association** is excited to begin implementation of the program **Athletes As Leaders** for the fall of 2021. **Athletes As Leaders** is a program for high school athletes on girls' sports teams. The program aims to empower student athletes to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in changing social norms at school (and beyond) to a culture of safety and respect. The program is suggested to be used in conjunction with the prevention program for boys' teams, **Coaching Boys Into Men** which is currently being implemented in the State of Alaska. We believe everyone plays a role in creating a safe community.

We are tentatively planning a two day training session in Anchorage August 2 & 3, 2021 with the program developer Rebecca Milliman. Rebecca is the Prevention & Education Manager for the Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center in Seattle. Our goal is to train up to two advocates from each major urban area who would then work with a statewide coordinator to facilitate and monitor program implementation. Once the pilot programs are in place, the coordinator would then broaden the trainings to rural Alaska.

Please reach out to the female leadership within your district/area to those who you feel would fit well as an **Athletes As Leaders** resource. We would like to have a list of confirmed attendees prior to the end of the school year so that we can appropriately budget for travel and lodging. ASAA will provide travel and lodging for those outside of Anchorage and a small stipend for all participants.

Please direct questions, interested advocates and contact information to:

Brian Hosken
Brian@asaa.org
(907) 244-1336

Alaska School Activities Association
Student Service Coordinator
Coaching Boys Into Men Coordinator

<https://www.athletesasleaders.org>

Attachments:
AAL Background Description
AAL Program Description



About the Program:

Athletes As Leaders is a program for high school athletes on girls' sports teams. The program aims to empower youth to take an active role in challenging gender stereotypes, promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. It is based on research and best practices in the field of sexual assault prevention. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in changing peer norms and school climate to a culture of safety and respect. The program is designed to be used in conjunction with other programs with intentional efforts to engage men and boys.

Program Sessions:

1. Introductions & Group Agreements
2. Challenging Gender Stereotypes
3. Privilege & Oppression
4. Self- Image & Standards of Beauty
5. Rumor Spreading
6. Relationships
7. Consent
8. Messages About Manhood
9. Promoting Positivity
10. Celebrating our Successes

Athletes As Leaders was created by:

Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center, Seattle, WA



Authors:

Rebecca Milliman, Lead Author

Jahtia Benton

Lisa Brooks

Created in collaboration with:

Brian O'Connor, Futures without Violence

Yesenia Gorbea, Futures without Violence

Mo Lewis, National Sexual Violence Resource Center

Kat Monusky, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs

The Athletes at Garfield High School, Seattle, WA

A Special Thank You To:

Garfield High School, Seattle, WA and Principal Ted Howard

The athletes and coaches of girls' sports teams at Garfield High School, Seattle, WA

Our original pilot groups and Advisory Board at Garfield High School:

2015-17 Girls' Basketball Teams and Coaches Joyce Walker & Lee Adams

2015-17 Girls' Wrestling Teams and Coaches Jolynn Wynn & JL Williams

Jayneka Howard

Sara Miller

Kendall Burwell

Jacky Hoang

Laura Harrington

Elise Morris

The Coaching Boys into Men National Advisory Board Sub-Committee

Our first national pilot sites:

2017 Track Team, Worland High School, Worland, WY

2017 Track Team, Lovell High School, Lovell, WY

2017 Tennis Team, Charles City High School, Charles City, IA

2017 Softball Team, Red River High School, Grand Forks, ND

The development of the program was made possible by support from our funders:

Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, Department of Commerce, State of Washington

This publication was supported by the Grant or Cooperative Agreement Number UF2 CE002450-03, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Raliance

This document was supported by a grant from Raliance, a collaborative initiative to end sexual violence in one generation, made possible through a commitment from the National Football League (NFL). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NFL.



Background Information And Connection to Sexual Assault Prevention

About the Program:

Athletes As Leaders is a program for high school athletes on girls' sports teams. The program aims to empower female-identified youth to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. It is based on research and best practices in the field of sexual assault prevention. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in changing peer norms and school climate to a culture of safety and respect. The program is designed to be used in conjunction with other programs with intentional efforts to engage men and boys.

Origins of the Program:

The program was originally drafted in 2015 by the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress as part of a comprehensive sexual assault prevention project at Garfield High School in Seattle, WA. The first pilot group, which included athletes from both the wrestling and basketball teams, served as an advisory board where they helped shape the development of the program. Since then, the program has been evaluated with several teams at Garfield and several others nationally with promising results.

"Athletes As Leaders" was originally named "Student Leaders & Athletic Youth," or SLAY. The name was coined by the original pilot group and youth advisory board for the program. "Slay" is common slang term used by young people. Urban dictionary provides the definition: "to succeed in something amazing." We acknowledge that this term traditionally had a violent connotation, and we appreciate that youth, particularly young women, have reclaimed this term and use it in a very positive, empowering way.

As the program started to gain interest nationally, we received feedback that the name "SLAY" did not translate in several other communities. We decided to re-brand with a new name "Athletes As Leaders." Athletes as Leaders is a program that is culturally competent, rooted in anti-oppression, and based on the research in our field, and that is relevant to young people. The name gets to the heart of what the program is about, and gives the program opportunity to grow.

Rationale: The Connection between Athletes As Leaders and Sexual Assault Prevention

Our program empowers young people to change social norms in their community. Young people are given many messages in society about gender inequality and unhealthy relationships. When girls support and encourage one another to become leaders in their communities, everyone benefits. They can have an active voice in creating new norms that support female empowerment, gender equity and healthy relationships.

Athletes As Leaders is based on research and best practices in sexual assault prevention and seeks to make communities safer. Research shows that when girls are empowered, sexual violence is actually less likely to occur.¹ Promoting girl positivity and teaching girls to challenge gender stereotypes also contributes to the creation of a safer environment and moves toward a violence-free world.

Primary prevention refers to stopping violence before it starts. Research shows that sexual assault primary prevention strategies should target men and boys, as they are more likely to perpetrate this type of violence.² More and more, sexual assault primary prevention programs aim to teach boys to respect people of all genders, to challenge unhealthy messages about masculinity, and to intervene when they see others treating someone abusively. These programs are a critical piece of the movement against sexual violence, and we recommend that Athletes As Leaders be used alongside other programming with intentional efforts to engage men and boys, such as Coaching Boys into Men.

But we can't stop with boys... because ending sexual violence will take all of us. The more inclusive the movement, the more comprehensive the efforts will be. People of all genders have a role to play in preventing sexual violence, including high school girls.

...And we can't rely on traditional sexual assault prevention messages targeting girls and women. These include messages such as:

"Don't walk alone at night."

"Be sure to watch your drink. Better yet, don't drink at all."

"Don't dress in a way that might send someone the wrong message."

"Take a self-defense class."

"Carry mace or a whistle."

These messages are usually well-intentioned and are not necessarily bad advice in a world where women rightfully fear victimization. But a person can follow all of them and still be

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

² Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations: A conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls. *Lancet* (London, England), 385(9977), 1580-9.

sexually assaulted. These messages tend to focus the responsibility on the victims of assault rather than on the perpetrators.

The only way to truly prevent sexual assault before it happens-- primary prevention-- is to prevent the perpetrator from perpetrating and to change the social norms that allow sexual violence to happen. This is why efforts targeting all genders are indispensable.

Athletes As Leaders aims to target some of the subtle and normalized forms of sexual harassment and violence that girls perpetrate on other girls. This includes bullying, sexual harassment (including "slut-shaming"), rumor spreading, and female objectification, which are particularly common among youth. The program also addresses ways that girls contribute to a climate where sexual violence is more likely to happen, such as the general tolerance of sexual violence, adherence to traditional gender role norms, and social norms related to gender inequity.

These more subtle forms of violence and gender norms contribute to an environment that devalues girls and women, which is a risk factor for sexual violence.³ Thus, the CDC lists "strengthening leadership and opportunities for adolescent girls" as a key approach for preventing sexual violence.⁴

Athletes As Leaders promotes female empowerment and offers opportunities for team bonding. But in reality, it's so much more.

Why Athletes?

Athletic programs are a fitting location for both sexual assault prevention and leadership development programming.

- 1) **High school athletes have strong social networks.** Research shows that athletes tend to have high levels of social capital. They are often popular and respected.⁵ Athletes tend to have a lot of friends and be leaders at school. Over half of all high school students play at least one sport,⁶ so if we think about all the students on an athletic team plus all of their diverse cross-sections of friends, reaching athletes has the potential to spread a positive message throughout a community.
- 2) **The team environment is conducive to social norms re-setting.** Athletes As Leaders helps teams create team norms (during the "Team Talk") that they can all agree to carry out in their communities. A sports team is a perfect environment for the athletes

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-prevention-technical-package.pdf>

⁵ Dobosz, R., & Beaty, L. (1999). The relationship between athletic participation and high school students' leadership ability. *Adolescence*, 34(133), 215-20.

⁶ <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=participation-in-school-athletics>

and coaches to be able to reinforce the agreed-upon norms. They can practice the new team norms on and off the field together. If whole athletic teams begin to live out healthy social norms, they will influence their friends and family not on the team to also live out healthy norms.

- 3) **For boys, sports can be a place that reinforces the harmful, stereotypical narrative of masculinity in our culture.** In sports, boys are socialized to be strong, tough and unemotional. "Locker room talk" often degrades women and LGBTQ people. Hyper-masculinity is often celebrated in sports culture, while challenging traditional male stereotypes is discouraged. For these reasons, sports are a critical space to begin deconstructing these gender stereotypes and setting a standard of respect.

- 4) **Female athletes are already challenging gender stereotypes every day, but there's still a long way to go.** Female athletes represent what it means to be strong, tough and determined women. Because of the federal Title IX law mandating gender equality within federally funded schools, more girls are getting a chance to play sports than ever before. But large pay inequities still exist between male and female professional athletes and media coverage of female sports is significantly less than that of men's and often focuses on the female athlete's appearance rather than her performance. So, sports provide a place where girls and women can feel empowered and a fitting platform to continue to push for equality.

Using Athletes As Leaders in Your Community:

Our online toolkit offers many resources to help get you started, including:

- » The Complete Program
- » Evaluation Tools
- » Implementation Guide for Advocates
- » Trainings for Mentors & Coaches
- » Facilitation Guide for Mentors
- » Information for Coaches and Athletes

Learn more at <http://www.AthletesAsLeaders.org/>

Athletes As Leaders was created by:

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress, Seattle, WA

The development of the program was supported by our funders:

Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, Department of Commerce, State of Washington

This publication was supported by the Grant or Cooperative Agreement Number UF2 CE002450-03, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents

are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Raliance

This document was supported by a grant from Raliance, a collaborative initiative to end sexual violence in one generation, made possible through a commitment from the National Football League (NFL). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NFL.