



CDC's Rape Prevention and Education Grant Program

Preventing Sexual Violence in the United States 2004



“The Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program provides opportunities for state and local agencies to address sexual violence as a preventable community problem. RPE funds provide critical support to communities and states as they work toward a future free of sexual violence.”

*Kristen Houser
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence*



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION**

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Sexual Violence as a Public Health Problem

Sexual Violence is a significant public health problem in the United States. Estimates from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), cosponsored by the National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suggest that 302,091 women and 92,748 men are raped each year in the United States. The survey also estimates that 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have been victims of a completed or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime. More than half of all lifetime rapes happen before age 18; almost one-third of rapes occur before age 12. In ap-

proximately 8 out of 10 cases (83%), the victim knew the perpetrator.

Victims of sexual violence may experience a variety of long-term physical and psychological consequences such as chronic pelvic, head, back and facial pain; gastrointestinal disorders; eating disorders; substance abuse; depression; and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Sexual violence has a devastating impact on individuals, families, communities, and our society as a whole.

Preventing Sexual Violence by Building State Capacity

Understanding the far-reaching impact of sexual violence and the importance of prevention, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994, which established CDC's Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Program. Congress reauthorized \$80 million for this program in the Violence Against Women Act of 2000.

With fiscal year 2004 funding of approximately \$44 million, CDC provides national leadership on sexual violence prevention by supporting rape prevention and education programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and seven U.S. territories. RPE programs use funding to increase awareness about sexual violence through educational seminars (for professionals, the public, schools, colleges, and universities), hotline operations, and development of informational materials. Other efforts target underserved communities and people with disabilities.

Authorized Uses of Rape Prevention and Education Grant Program Funding

RPE funding may be used for:

- Educational seminars
- Hotline operations
- Training programs for professionals
- Development of informational materials
- Education and training programs aimed at preventing sexual violence at colleges and universities
- Education about date rape drugs
- Other efforts to increase awareness about sexual violence

The following sections highlight CDC's RPE Program initiatives for addressing sexual violence.

Educational Seminars: Raising Awareness and Changing Attitudes

CDC's RPE programs are implemented in a variety of settings—schools, sports programs, faith-based institutions, and community-based organizations—to increase awareness of sexual violence. Recognizing that attitudes and beliefs supporting sexual violence are formed early in life, many RPE grantees focus on programs aimed at young people. This promotes healthy relationships and nonviolent norms. In 2002, RPE grantees provided more than three million school and community educational seminars.



Kansas

By creating partnerships with organizations throughout the state, the RPE Program at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment focuses on strategies to prevent first-time male perpetration of sexual violence. These programs target males ages 9 to 19 and are designed to address sexual harassment, abuse, rape, and other violent acts. The program promotes respect, rights, and responsibilities among students through mentoring, classroom exercises, and interactive activities.

Hotline Operations: Enhancing Education, Outreach, and Support Efforts

The RPE Program provides crucial support for state and local hotlines. Operated by RPE grantees, hotlines

provide 24-hour crisis intervention, referrals, and information about sexual violence. In 2002, RPE-supported hotlines received more than 200,000 calls.



Massachusetts

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Llamanos is a Spanish-language toll-free sexual assault hotline. It provides Spanish-speaking sexual assault survivors and their loved ones with culturally competent crisis intervention, counseling, and referrals to other services. CDC's RPE funding provides technical assistance, training, outreach, and case consultation to improve the quality of sexual assault services for Latinos throughout the state. These funds also allowed Llamanos to provide training for 13 rape crisis centers, 5 community health organizations, and 8 additional community-based agencies serving Latinos.

Training for Professionals: Enhancing State and Community Capacity

Through professional education, CDC's RPE Program has helped a wide range of professionals—youth leaders, coaches, teachers, clergy, social service workers, and health care professionals—to better understand sexual violence and the role each can play in prevention. In 2002, more than 280,000 professionals received training supported by CDC's RPE funding.



Indiana

In Indiana, a statewide initiative supported by the RPE Program is working to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and rape among school-age youth. A team composed of Indiana State University faculty and a group of school teachers developed and published a pilot rape prevention curriculum for rural, urban, and suburban middle schools and high schools. Now in its sixth year, the program has trained more than 800 Indiana teachers to use the curriculum. Pre- and post-test results from more than 4,600 students in 57 Indiana schools show positive changes in students' knowledge and attitudes about rape.

Informational Materials: Developing Prevention and Education Initiatives

CDC's RPE Program uses informational materials—such as curricula, training tools, videos, media campaign

products, and special reports—to inform and educate. These materials help RPE grantees disseminate prevention messages and other information about sexual violence.



Idaho

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare developed an award winning media campaign designed to raise men's awareness of sexual violence and their role in prevention. These public service announcements received the *2003 Gold Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication* from the National Public Health Information Coalition. Evaluation results indicate the campaign was successful in raising awareness of men's responsibility for preventing sexual assault against dates and acquaintances.

Education and Training Programs: Preventing Sexual Violence at Colleges and Universities

CDC's RPE program, in collaboration with students and campus personnel, develop and implement innovative sexual violence prevention programs for colleges and universities. These programs are designed to reduce first-time male perpetration of sexual violence, address norms and beliefs that support or condone sexual violence, and empower bystanders to respond constructively when presented with abusive situations.



Colorado

The Stimulate Conversation Campaign, funded through the Colorado Department of Health and Environment's RPE Program, brings sexual violence prevention to five college campuses in Colorado. The campaign is designed to encourage communication among college students about consent for sexual activity. Increased communication can enhance positive relationship skills for men and women and change student culture that may inadvertently support date and acquaintance rape.

Drug-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Increasing Awareness

Drug-facilitated sexual violence is a growing problem. Drugs are used to render victims incapable of providing consent for sexual activity or in defending themselves against rape. The most common drug used is alcohol, but other substances are also used. Recognizing this growing problem, CDC's RPE Program developed a variety of

educational initiatives designed to increase awareness about alcohol- and drug-facilitated sexual assault.



Florida

As part of a statewide sexual violence prevention campaign, the Florida Department of Health used RPE funding to increase awareness in bars and clubs throughout the state and provided a toll-free number and website with information on victim services and sexual violence prevention. The message was clear—“Watch your drink at all times. Stay safe from club drugs.” Calls to the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence increased by 300% as a result of this campaign.

Other Efforts: Expanding CDC’s Reach to Prevent Sexual Violence

In addition to specific activities authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), CDC’s RPE Program employs many other innovative efforts to prevent sexual

violence. RPE grantees recognize that traditionally underserved communities are often disproportionately impacted by sexual violence, and they are working with these communities to develop culturally relevant prevention and education programs.



Washington

One example is a coalition of groups in Washington who work with stakeholders in individual communities to determine the focus of prevention efforts. Since each community has its own culture, including strengths and challenges, the coalition recognized there is no single effective approach to reducing the incidence of sexual violence. Working with coalition partners, stakeholders plan action strategies, identify outcomes to gauge progress, determine the necessary resources, and implement the initiative. These types of partnerships empower communities to address sexual violence on their own terms.

CDC’s Role in Prevention

CDC provides ongoing technical assistance and training to help states plan, establish, and evaluate sexual violence prevention programs. To support the development of prevention initiatives in underserved communities, CDC sponsored the satellite broadcast and webcast training, “Sexual Violence Prevention: Building Leadership and Commitment to Underserved Populations,” in April 2003. CDC also sponsors a biennial National Sexual Violence Prevention Conference attended by more than 800 researchers, practitioners, advocates, and federal and state government officials.

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), established by VAWA 2000 and administered by CDC, supports rape prevention and education efforts at the local, state, and national levels. The NSVRC provides technical assistance and disseminates information to coalitions, local rape crisis centers, government and tribal entities, colleges and universities, researchers, allied organizations, policymakers, and the public. Contact the NSVRC toll-free at (877) 739-3895 or visit the website at www.nsvrc.org.

Future Directions

CDC continues to work with state health departments, state sexual assault coalitions, and other partners in building the capacity of state and local programs to implement and evaluate comprehensive sexual violence prevention programs. In 2002, more than 1,000 rape crisis centers, 36 state sexual assault coalitions, and 140

other nonprofit and faith-based organizations received funding for prevention and education activities. The continued success of CDC’s RPE Program depends on the capacity to extend its reach throughout the United States.

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