

# Preventing Sexual Violence in California

## Changing Social Norms to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is using an innovative approach to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence across the state. With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program**, California is working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including local rape crisis centers, Blue Shield of California Foundation, and the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**. These collaborations have strengthened the state's sexual violence prevention efforts which are framed in the public health perspective where **norms and communities play an important role**. Like California's smoking campaign that aims to make smoking socially unacceptable and resulted in significant decreases in the prevalence of smoking in the state, California's RPE activities aim **to make sexual violence intolerable across the state**.

The CDC RPE program has been strengthening our communities and striving to reduce the burden of sexual violence since 1994. CDC provides RPE funding to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

### WHAT IS CALIFORNIA DOING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

All states, including California, use multiple programs and tools to implement and sustain prevention efforts that can ultimately decrease the number of individuals who **perpetrate sexual violence** and the number of individuals who are **victims of sexual violence**. California is taking a **systemic approach** to identify and transform the underlying conditions that allow sexual violence to exist and is addressing the harmful **social norms**, values, beliefs, and attitudes that contribute to sexual violence.

California is supporting 27 local rape crisis centers as they implement prevention strategies aimed at changing behaviors of communities, families, and young people so they can **collectively stop sexual violence before it begins**. The state RPE program is partnering with the state sexual violence coalition, CALCASA, to provide training and technical assistance for the state's rape crisis centers to **expand from being service agents to also becoming change agents** in their respective communities. What's the result? Rape crisis centers across the state are working to change policies in schools and other settings to **prevent the occurrence of sexual violence by shifting the environment, norms, and attitudes** that contribute to it.

### WHY IS CALIFORNIA WORKING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Among female high school students in California:



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

### WHAT IMPACT IS THE RPE PROGRAM INTENDED TO HAVE IN CALIFORNIA?

The California RPE program aims to prevent sexual violence by promoting **non-violent social norms, attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices**.



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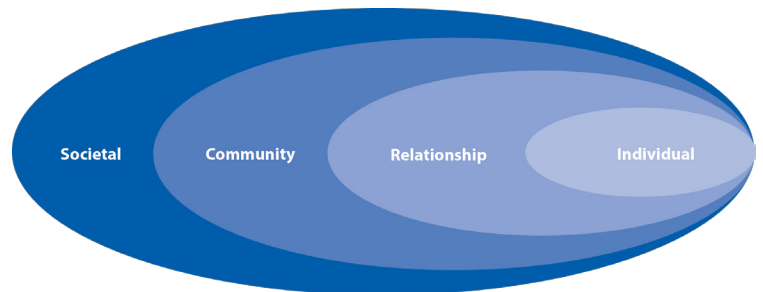
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### HOW DOES CHANGING SOCIAL NORMS AFFECT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

The ultimate goal of sexual violence prevention is to **stop the violence before it begins**. Prevention requires understanding the factors that influence violence and how they interact among individuals, families, communities, and the broader society. These factors include social and cultural norms that support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. These norms, in turn, affect – **community settings in which relationships are fostered** and the **behaviors within relationships** that contribute to an individual's likelihood to experience or perpetrate sexual violence.

In addition to the collaborative work of California's RPE Program with rape crisis centers across the state, CDPH is also partnering with the **Blue Shield of California Foundation** to support RPE efforts in establishing a learning network in California to advance promising practices in community mobilization and youth leadership for preventing sexual violence and teen dating violence. And it doesn't stop there. The program serves as a state-level model for local partners on how to create shifts in social norms -- by bringing a critical mass of partners together who **join perspectives, funds, and dedication to prevent violence**.



The coordinated and strategic efforts in California have resulted in:



**What does this mean for California?** Thanks to funding from the CDC RPE program, efforts are underway across the state to:



For additional information or to locate contact information for the state RPE program, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/rpe/states.html>