

# Preventing Sexual Violence in Minnesota

Expanding Scope and Partnerships to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The Minnesota Department of Health has enlarged its network of partners and broadened the scope of its sexual violence prevention initiatives to reflect its understanding of sexual violence as a **multi-faceted public health problem** affecting everyone, directly or indirectly, and resulting in long-term social and economic costs. With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **Rape Prevention and Education (RPE)** program, Minnesota is working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA), Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs, Men as Peacemakers, The Advocates for Human Rights, and numerous community organizations, as well as through the Sexual Violence Prevention Network and Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**.

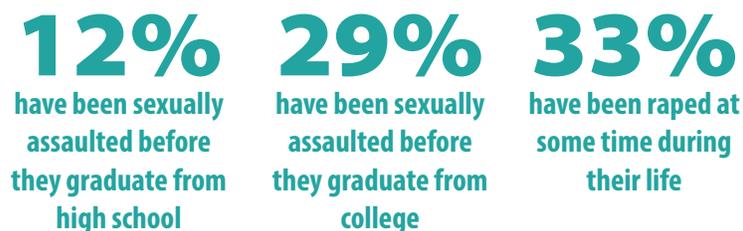
The CDC RPE program has been strengthening our communities and striving to reduce the burden of sexual violence since 1994. CDC provides RPE funding to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

## WHAT IS MINNESOTA DOING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

In 2009, Minnesota worked with partners to develop a plan to **prevent sexual violence and exploitation statewide**. The state plan, entitled *The Promise of Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence*,<sup>1</sup> articulates Minnesota's vision for a state free from sexual violence and serves as a guide to prioritize goals, strategies, and initiatives related to the prevention of sexual violence and exploitation. Minnesota's plan broadens the scope of sexual violence to include sexual exploitation, defined as using children, youth, or adults in a sexual manner for the individual or commercial gain of those more powerful and without regard of the harm being caused to the person being used. The inclusion of sexual exploitation in Minnesota's plan coincided with legislation (2005-2011) establishing the **Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force (MNHTTF)**, which is currently coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Health, to end human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Minnesota through a coordinated, multidisciplinary, statewide response which includes services, response, and primary prevention. The MNHTTF meets quarterly and has grown since inception to include over 800 members. The Minnesota Department of Health works with other MNHTTF partners to provide leadership and resources (including a vibrant statewide listserv and strong Facebook following) to those working to end sexual violence and sexual exploitation throughout the state. In addition to its work in human trafficking, the state hosted a highly successful Minnesota Campus Sexual Violence Prevention Summit in June 2016. The purpose of the summit was to share best practices and experiences to create a shared community and commitment to effective prevention of sexual violence, dating violence, sexual harassment, and stalking.

## WHY IS MINNESOTA WORKING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Among Minnesota girls and women:



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

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



Sources: Minnesota Student Survey 2010, Boynton 2010 College Student Health Survey, and the Minnesota Crime Survey 2008.

<sup>1</sup>The Promise of Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence: A Five-Year Plan to Prevent Sexual Violence and Exploitation in Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, June 2009. Web site: [www.health.state.mn.us/injury](http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury)

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## WHAT CAN PUBLIC HEALTH DO TO STOP SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Minnesota is leading the way in the effort to use primary prevention strategies to stop sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Primary prevention efforts in Minnesota focus on strategies to end sexual exploitation and the demand for it thereby reducing sexual violence in communities. Effective **primary prevention efforts** to end sexual exploitation focus on actions to:

- Reduce the likelihood that individuals will seek to buy or sell women or children.
- Reduce the likelihood that women and children will be vulnerable to such exploitation.
- Reduce the ways that businesses profit from human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

As a multidisciplinary task force, MNHTTF is engaged in a number of initiatives each year designed to effectively prevent **human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence**. Initiatives are completed at a committee level and leadership is provided by the MNHTTF Steering Committee, which includes members representing the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, and several community-based organizations. Past MNHTTF Steering Committee interventions have ranged from increasing awareness of sexual exploitation among healthcare providers to supporting policy initiatives that increase penalties for those who exploit children and youth. Over the past decade, the achievements of the MNHTTF committees have included conducting a comprehensive sex trafficking **needs assessment, training county attorneys** about the MNHTTF legislation, and **working with the Minnesota legislature** to pass the Safe Harbors for Sexually Exploited Youth law, which includes protections for children who are sexually exploited, clarifying that they are crime victims, not criminals. Plans are underway to convene leaders at a statewide event that will focus on organizational policy advancements, as well as primary prevention training for service providers.

How will we know if this approach is working? In 2012, researchers from the University of Minnesota and Indiana State University released the results of a study assessing the impact of early intervention and prevention of sexual exploitation among female adolescents in Minnesota.<sup>2</sup> Although the study was limited to assessing only the financial impact of early interventions to prevent sexual exploitation, the results indicate that policy efforts to prevent sexual exploitation among female adolescents return **\$34 in benefit for every \$1 in intervention cost**. Although these results are encouraging, additional research is needed to assess the full impact of interventions to prevent sexual exploitation and violence among children, youth, and adults.

**What does this mean for Minnesota?** 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>

<sup>2</sup>Martin L, Lotspeich R, Stark L. Early Intervention to Avoid Sex Trading and Trafficking of Minnesota's Female Youth: A Benefit-Cost Analysis (2012). Available at: <http://mnhttf.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Benefit-Cost-Study-Full.pdf>