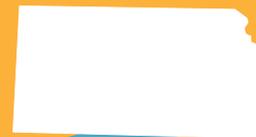


Preventing Sexual Violence in Kansas

Building Capacity to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The Kansas Department of Health and Environment is engaged in a wide range of activities to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence, and it has taken a novel approach to the collection and use of data to better understand and **stop sexual violence BEFORE it begins**. With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **Rape Prevention and Education (RPE)** program, Kansas is thinking outside the box to enhance its understanding of sexual violence. By collecting and analyzing data related to **sexual violence, chronic disease, and other health risk behaviors** (such as tobacco use and physical inactivity), the state is able to make connections between multiple variables and use the information to **inform policies and practices** that prevent sexual violence.

WHAT IS KANSAS DOING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Kansas collects data to better understand trends in sexual violence and other public health concerns in order to develop prevention activities that work. One tool that Kansas uses for this purpose is the Kansas **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)**, an annual survey of adults ages 18 years and older living in Kansas. In 2011, Kansas took a novel approach to examining sexual violence in their state by using an optional module to assess the prevalence of sexual assault among Kansas adults. The **Sexual Assault Module** allowed Kansas to use BRFSS data for the first time to explore the association between sexual violence, chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, as well as other health risk behaviors. Building on that foundation, Kansas further expanded its state-level BRFSS by including additional sexual violence questions and the **Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) module** that includes questions about abuse and other measures of family dysfunction experienced during childhood. The unique approach that Kansas is taking will enhance **understanding of the connection** between sexual violence, chronic diseases, and health risk behaviors and allow Kansas to identify new ways to **prevent sexual violence before it begins**.

WHY IS KANSAS WORKING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Among Kansas women 18 years and older who have experienced sexual assault:

The prevalence of experiencing fair or poor health is **2x higher** than among women who have not experienced sexual assault

The prevalence of experiencing poor mental health or anxiety is **3x higher** than among women who have not experienced sexual assault

The prevalence of suicide ideation (thinking about suicide) is **4x higher** than among women who have not experienced sexual assault

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 IMPACT IS THE RPE PROGRAM INTENDED TO HAVE IN KANSAS?

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



Source: 2011 Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Bureau of Health Promotion, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

¹ For additional information about the BRFSS questionnaire, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/index.htm>

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WHY ARE DATA IMPORTANT FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Better data means a better understanding of the **causes of sexual violence**. In Kansas, better data also means a better understanding of the **relationship between sexual violence and chronic disease**. In 2014, researchers from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the University of Kansas Medical Center published the results of a study using the Kansas BRFSS data, including data from the Sexual Assault and ACE modules, and reported on the relationship between sexual violence and chronic diseases. The findings from the study provide a strong rationale for a **collaborative approach among violence prevention, chronic disease prevention, and mental health professionals** to prevent sexual violence. Key findings from the study indicate that women who have ever experienced sexual assault in their lifetime, compared to women who have not, report:

HIGHER
prevalence of health risk behaviors, such as heavy drinking, binge drinking, and use of tobacco

HIGHER
prevalence of chronic health conditions, such as physical disability and asthma

HIGHER
prevalence of mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation

Source: Santaularia J, Johnson M, Hart L, Haskett L, Welsh E, Faseru B. (2014) Relationships between Sexual Violence and Chronic Disease: A Cross-sectional Study. *BMC Public Health* 14:1286.

Identifying the connections between sexual violence and chronic disease has helped Kansas identify target populations most affected by both sexual violence and chronic disease. As a result, the state has been able to **focus prevention efforts where they are needed most**. Why is that important? The state can make the most of its funding and simultaneously work to prevent sexual violence and address other key public health concerns.

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

INCREASE
understanding of the connection between sexual violence, chronic disease, and other adverse health outcomes

STRENGTHEN
and create new partnerships among individuals and organizations to prevent sexual violence.

ENHANCE
the focus on risk and protective factors that make it less likely that people will experience sexual violence

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