

# Preventing Sexual Violence in Virginia

## Strengthening Community Capacity to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The **Virginia Department of Health** 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, Virginia is working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including the Virginia Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, **Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance)** and six community-based organizations to stop **sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**.

These collaborations have strengthened Virginia's sexual violence prevention efforts by supporting the development and implementation of a **statewide plan to prevent sexual violence**.

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

All states, including Virginia, use multiple programs and tools to implement and sustain prevention efforts that ultimately decrease the number of individuals who **perpetrate sexual violence** and who are **victims of sexual violence**. In Virginia, the Department of Health works closely with its partners at the Action Alliance to achieve the **goals and outcomes** described in their statewide plan to prevent sexual violence. These goals include enhancing the effectiveness of sexual violence primary prevention strategies, increasing community capacity to address and prevent violence, increasing effective response to risk factors that increase the likelihood that a person will perpetrate sexual violence, and increasing promotion of protective factors that foster healthy relationships and decrease the likelihood of sexual violence perpetration or victimization. To achieve these goals, the partners work together to provide **training, resources, and technical assistance** to community-based organizations working on the front lines to address and prevent sexual violence. Through the hands-on assistance provided to Virginia communities and innovative funding requirements that encourage community-based organizations to use **prevention guidelines** developed by the Action Alliance, Virginia is **strengthening community capacity** to engage in **primary prevention** of sexual violence.

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.

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

Among women in Virginia:

**11%**  
have been raped

**42%**

have been the victim of sexual violence other than rape

**31%**

have been the victim of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner

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

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



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### WHAT IF YOU COULD STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES' ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT AND EVALUATE PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAMS THAT PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

That's exactly what Virginia is doing with funding it receives through CDC's RPE program. With funding and support from the Virginia Department of Health, the Action Alliance developed the *Guidelines for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence*. Since their development in 2009, the guidelines have been widely shared and used across Virginia to forge new partnerships within communities, energize people to address the root causes of sexual violence, and catalyze community organizations to implement and evaluate primary prevention strategies that **promote less violent, healthier, and happier communities**. The guidelines include:

- Develop prevention strategies that promote protective factors
- Develop prevention strategies that strive to be comprehensive
- Develop prevention strategies that are concentrated, and can be sustained and expanded over time
- Develop prevention strategies that use varied teaching methods to address multiple learning processes
- Develop prevention programs based on purposeful, logical rationale
- Develop prevention strategies that are developmentally appropriate
- Develop prevention strategies in collaboration with a representative cross-section of community members to incorporate diverse cultural beliefs, practices, and community norms
- Develop prevention strategies that include a systematic method to determine program effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement
- Develop prevention strategies as an integral part of the agency mission to end sexual violence and intimate partner violence

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THIS APPROACH IS WORKING?** The Guidelines for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence have been used as part of the training and technical assistance provided to numerous community-based organizations in Virginia over the past several years. In addition to the request for proposal requirements used by the Virginia Department of Health to select community-based organizations to receive RPE funds, the guidelines have **built awareness** of the importance of primary sexual violence prevention strategies and **increased community capacity** to implement and evaluate these strategies. As more communities use the guidelines and report on their evaluation activities, even more will become known about the contribution that Virginia's innovative approach is making toward the prevention of sexual violence.

What does this mean for Virginia? 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>