

Preventing Sexual Violence in Wyoming

Building Strong and Caring Communities to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs

The **Wyoming 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, Wyoming is working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including the **Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (WCADVSA)** and six community partners to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**. These collaborations have strengthened Wyoming's sexual violence prevention efforts by allowing the state to **work collaboratively with communities** to promote **positive youth development** within the context of **strong and caring communities**.

WHAT IS WYOMING DOING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

All states, including Wyoming, 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 2009, the Wyoming Department of Health made a **strategic decision** to move away from funding numerous communities to work on diverse sexual violence prevention initiatives toward funding fewer communities to work on related sexual violence prevention initiatives. Wyoming effectively consolidated the RPE funding to support WCADVSA and a small group of communities that agreed to use a **proven, community-change process** to promote positive youth development and stop sexual violence within their communities and throughout the state. Wyoming identified **Communities That Care (CTC)** as an approach that could help communities **connect the dots between healthy relationships and healthy sexuality** and promote positive youth development. By reframing its sexual violence prevention program around the CTC approach, Wyoming has been able to **build an effective community coalition**, complete a **community needs assessment**, and develop a **work plan based on the needs assessment and community resources** to prevent sexual violence before it occurs.

WHY IS WYOMING WORKING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Among Wyoming high school students:

10%

have been forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their life

9%

have been physically hurt on purpose by someone they were dating one or more times in the past 12 months

8%

have been physically forced by someone they were dating to engage in sexual activities one or more times in the past 12 months

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 WYOMING?

The Wyoming 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 EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

That's exactly what Wyoming is doing with funding it receives through **CDC's RPE program**. The Wyoming Department of Health had already begun **consolidating resources and rethinking its approach** to the primary prevention of sexual violence when it became aware of the Communities That Care (CTC) approach. CTC is based on the **social development model** that hypothesizes that communities that provide youth with **opportunities for involvement**, ensure youth **develop competencies or skills** for participation, and consistently **reinforce effort and participation** produce strong bonds between young people and their communities. The model hypothesizes that **strong bonds to family and community set children on a positive developmental trajectory**, resulting in more positive outcomes and fewer subsequent health-risk behaviors.

Using CTC-trained facilitators and coaches, Wyoming will guide communities through a **five-phase community change process** that will help them identify and prevent problems before they develop. The five phases are:

1. **Get Started:** Communities get ready to introduce CTC. They work to identify stakeholders, assess community readiness to begin the process, and engage community leaders to serve as champions.
2. **Get Organized:** Communities form a board or work with an existing coalition. Together, they learn about prevention science, write a vision statement, organize workgroups, and develop a timeline for the CTC process.
3. **Develop a Community Profile:** Communities assess their risks and strengths, and identify existing resources. They review survey data, identify priority risk and protective factors, and identify gaps to be filled in existing resources.
4. **Create a Community Action Plan:** The community board or coalition creates a plan for prevention activities in their community to reduce risks and strengthen protective factors.
5. **Implement and Evaluate:** In this final phase, communities implement selected programs and policies, monitor and evaluate their impact, and use results to ensure improvements are achieved.



How will we know if this approach is working? CTC was tested in a randomized controlled trial involving 24 communities across seven states. Communities were randomly assigned to participate in the CTC process or serve as a control community. Students in the communities that participated in CTC were **25 percent less likely to have engaged in violent behavior** in the past year, as compared to students in communities that did not participate in CTC. In Wyoming, efforts will continue to assess the impact of CTC specifically on sexual violence through the short- and long-term outcomes built into the model.

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

DECREASE RISK FACTORS
that make it more likely
that people will experience
sexual violence

INCREASE PROTECTIVE FACTORS
that make it less
likely that people will
experience sexual violence

CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES
by preventing sexual
violence from occurring in
the first place

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

SAFE STATES

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