

Preventing Sexual Violence in Massachusetts

Creating a Statewide Plan to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is engaged in innovative partnerships 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, Massachusetts is working collaboratively with a diverse group of partners, including Jane Doe Inc.: The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and numerous community-based organizations to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**. The collaborative effort of this innovative group of partners has allowed Massachusetts to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the prevention of sexual violence across the state.

WHAT IS MASSACHUSETTS DOING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

All states, including Massachusetts, use multiple programs and tools to implement and sustain prevention efforts that ultimately decrease the number of individuals who **perpetrate sexual violence** and the number of individuals who are **victims of sexual violence**. To coordinate the efforts of numerous stakeholders working across the state to prevent sexual violence, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health worked in collaboration with Jane Doe Inc.: The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence to lead the state **Sexual Violence State Prevention Team** to develop the **Massachusetts Sexual Violence Prevention Plan**. The purpose of the state plan is to provide Massachusetts with a road map to use over a seven year period (2009–2016) to reduce the burden of sexual violence and expand the state’s capacity to address sexual violence and other forms of interpersonal violence.

WHY IS MASSACHUSETTS WORKING TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

In Massachusetts:

13%

of female high school students report experiencing unwanted sexual contact¹

16%

of female adults report having ever been sexually assaulted²

24%

of lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students reported ever having sexual contact against their will³

Sources: (1) Massachusetts YRBS, 2013; (2) Massachusetts BRFSS, 2015; and (3) Massachusetts Youth Health Survey, 2015

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 MASSACHUSETTS?

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



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HOW DOES A STATEWIDE PLAN PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

A statewide plan will help Massachusetts coordinate the efforts of stakeholders who are working throughout the state to prevent sexual violence. The plan highlights four goals for sexual violence prevention activities within the state. Each of the four goals is focused on a unique population or setting: children, LGBT persons, persons with developmental disabilities, and those working in government or community-based agencies. How will we know if the plan is working? The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Jane Doe Inc., The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, and the Massachusetts Sexual Violence State Prevention Team will monitor the plan activities to identify what is working and why.

Goal #1: Youth and caregivers will value and develop skills for respectful relationships.

Sample Action Steps:

- Educate parents to support children's healthy sexual development and safety.
- Teach adolescents about healthy sexuality and healthy relationships.
- Strengthen college and university policies and programming on healthy relationships and sexual and domestic violence prevention.

Goal #2: Promote healthy LGBT sexuality and relationships to prevent violence against LGBT people.

Sample Action Steps:

- Provide training to promote healthy LGBT relationships.
- Develop partnerships for additional research about sexual and domestic violence against LGBT people.

Goal #3: Promote healthy sexuality and relationships to prevent violence against people with developmental disabilities.

Sample Action Steps:

- Identify needs and resources to improve healthy sexuality and relationship training and programming for disability service providers and people with developmental disabilities.
- Develop cross-training and partnerships between sexual and domestic violence programs, sexual health programs, abuse prevention programs, and disability programs.

Goal #4: Build leadership within government, community groups, and institutions for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence.

Sample Action Steps:

- Support staff and volunteers of organizations engaged in sexual and domestic violence prevention to plan, carry out and evaluate primary prevention approaches.
- Promote healthy relationships and sexuality through responsible fatherhood and other initiatives for men and boys.

What does this mean for Massachusetts? 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>