

# Preventing Sexual Violence in Missouri

## Empowering College Students to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) 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, Missouri is working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCADSV), Partners in Prevention, and many colleges and universities across the state to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**. As a result of its collaborative work, Missouri has refocused and refined its approach to preventing sexual violence.

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

All states, including Missouri, use multiple programs and strategies with the support of coalitions and local programs 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**. In Missouri, DHSS and MCADSV made a strategic decision to maximize the impact of their work by supporting the statewide implementation of Green Dot, an evidence-based, comprehensive social change strategy that encourages individuals to incorporate violence prevention behaviors into everyday life. The model engages community members, particularly influential peer leaders, in a bystander training program aimed at **educating individuals to establish an intolerance for violence as a norm** and teaching bystanders the skills to assess high-risk situations and **intervene in a safe and effective manner**. To promote the implementation of Green Dot, DHSS implemented the program on five college campuses across the state and recently provided financial support to six additional colleges to assist them in launching their Green Dot programs to empower college students and academic institutions to **end sexual violence through social change, advocacy, education, and training**.

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

Missouri college students were assaulted at a rate of about

# 1 student EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY

in 2015.

Source: 2015 Missouri College Health Behavior Survey

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 MISSOURI?

The Missouri 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 EMPOWERED COLLEGE STUDENTS TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

That's exactly what DHSS is doing by supporting the statewide implementation of Green Dot with funding it receives through CDC's RPE program. As a bystander training and intervention initiative, Green Dot recognizes that many people are concerned about the high prevalence of sexual violence but don't have the confidence, skills, or tools to be part of the solution. Green Dot is predicated on the belief that individual safety is a **community responsibility** and shifts the primary focus of violence prevention activities away from victims/perpetrators and onto bystanders. The overarching goal of Green Dot is to **change the social norms around violence in the community** by training and mobilizing a force of **engaged and proactive potential bystanders** who can recognize a situation that could lead to sexual violence and effectively intervene to prevent such an episode from occurring.

The initiative uses the concept of green dots and red dots on a map. A red dot represents an episode of power-based personal violence, including sexual violence, domestic or intimate partner violence, stalking, bullying, child abuse, and elder abuse. A green dot represents any action or choice that shows **intolerance for power-based personal violence**, such as removing a friend from a situation that puts him or her at risk for being a victim, talking to friends about violence prevention, or showing support for violence prevention initiatives by displaying posters or other materials. The goal is to have a community with many green dots and no red dots.

Does Green Dot work? In an academic research study comparing students attending a college that implemented Green Dot with students attending two colleges that did not implement the program, researchers found that the college that implemented the Green Dot program experienced:<sup>1</sup>



These results are encouraging because they indicate that social change strategies, bystander training, and intervention programs, such as Green Dot, have the potential to reduce sexual violence among college students and ultimately the community at large wherever they are implemented.

What does this mean for Missouri? 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>1</sup> Coker AL, Fisher BS, Bush H M, Swan SC, Williams CM, Clear ER, DeGue S. (2014). Evaluation of the Green Dot Bystander Intervention to Reduce Interpersonal Violence Among College Students Across Three Campuses. *Violence against Women*. 21(12): 1507-1527.

