

# Preventing Sexual Violence in Vermont

## Supporting Campuses to Stop Sexual Violence BEFORE it Occurs



The Vermont Department of Health is actively engaged in building and maintaining 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, Vermont supports the work of numerous partners, including the **Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Vermont Network)**, **Advocacy Program at Umbrella**, and **Sexual Assault Crisis Team (SACT) of Washington County**. Together, Vermont and its partners are implementing a comprehensive set of strategies to **stop sexual violence BEFORE it occurs**.

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

Like all states, Vermont engages in multiple partnerships 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**. Although partners in Vermont are implementing sexual violence prevention programs and strategies for people of all ages, they have prioritized youth ages 14-17 and young adults, including college and university students. Vermont's sexual violence prevention activities are informed and guided by **Vermont's Plan to Address Sexual Violence Through Primary Prevention: 2015-2020** (<http://www.vtnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/State-SV-Prevention-Plan-Final-3.11.16.pdf>). Vermont's plan was the result of a year-long information gathering process led by the Vermont Network and Vermont Department of Health, and supported by the State Prevention Plan Advisory Team. One of the recommendations in the plan calls for enhancing the capacity of Vermont colleges and universities to prevent sexual violence. In 2014, Vermont first convened an **intercollegiate council** in response to the plan recommendation and to meet the state's need for a **systematic approach** to the prevention of sexual violence on campuses. As a participant in the intercollegiate council, Norwich University is partnering with SACT of Washington County to **assess campus attitudes** about sexual and domestic violence, convene an advisory team to **promote prevention activities on campus**, and implement **bystander training** for college personnel and students.

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

In Vermont:

**7%**

of high school students report having ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse<sup>1</sup>

**16%**

of adult women report having ever been physically abused or hurt by an intimate partner<sup>2</sup>

**19%**

of adult women report having ever been threatened or made to feel unsafe by an intimate partner<sup>2</sup>

Sources: (1) 2015 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey; (2) 2014 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

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 VERMONT?

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



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## HOW ARE COMMUNITIES IN VERMONT USING DATA TO STRENGTHEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS?

The **Vermont Network** supports more than a dozen member programs, many of which are part of the network's intercollegiate council which aims to support local colleges and universities in their efforts to prevent sexual violence on campus. The **Sexual Assault Crisis Team (SACT)**, a member of the Vermont Network, works closely with **Norwich University** to prevent sexual violence through a portfolio of coordinated strategies to promote individual, campus, and community-wide behavior change. They began their work by conducting a survey to assess students' attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence. The findings of the survey indicated there were ample opportunities to **improve awareness and change attitudes** about sexual violence on campus. For example, 77 percent of Norwich students reported that they believed teaching boys and men about communication could help prevent violence and 75 percent believed they would be able to assist someone they know who is experiencing sexual violence; however, 72 percent believed the most effective sexual violence prevention strategy is teaching girls and women how to keep themselves safe and only 33 percent believed sexual or dating violence is a problem on campus. The findings from the Norwich University assessment are currently being used to plan sexual violence prevention activities around campus, develop a **social media campaign** targeted to students, and provide **sexual violence prevention training** to students, faculty, and staff.

**Umbrella**, another member of the Vermont Network, conducted a survey to assess attitudes about sexual and dating violence. The results of this survey indicated that although most respondents recognized that **domestic violence** is a problem in their community, they were less likely to agree **sexual violence** is problem. **Youth reported feeling less empowered** than adults to prevent sexual violence or domestic violence in their own lives. Most youth were not sure whether sexual violence is a problem in schools, and most respondents were not aware of the prevalence of intimate partner violence among youth. The findings from this survey are being used to inform strategies that focus on providing training to students and encouraging the community to take ownership of sexual violence as a problem. Umbrella is also planning to implement a youth violence prevention program to engage them in strategies to prevent violence in their own lives, among their peers, and within their communities. Umbrella has convened a **Sexual Violence Prevention Community Advisory Team** comprised of representatives from over 15 stakeholder organizations, as well as community members, working together to strengthen sexual violence prevention within their community.

**What does this mean for Vermont?** 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>