

Preventing Sexual Violence Among Young People in the United States



HOW CDC'S RESEARCH ON BYSTANDER TRAINING HELPS PROTECT OUR FUTURE

Sexual violence is common. It is costly and devastating for individuals and communities. It is also preventable. CDC is leading the field by championing research that addresses critical gaps and informs prevention efforts in our states and communities. One innovative approach—*empowering bystanders to prevent sexual violence*—has gained increasing attention from public health and sexual violence prevention professionals, educators, school administrators, and policymakers. CDC's Division of Violence Prevention is advancing knowledge in this area through multiple research initiatives that examine how and when bystander training works to prevent sexual violence among young people.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

CDC's [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#) and other sources show that:

- About 1 in 3 women and nearly 1 in 6 men experience some form of contact sexual violence* in their lifetime.
- 1 in 5 women will experience rape or attempted rape in their lifetime.
- Sexual violence impacts young people. For example, 41% of female rape victims report that they were first raped before age 18.
- Sexual violence can cause short- and long-term physical and psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.
- CDC estimates that rape costs more than \$122,000 per victim across their lifetime, one third of which is paid for by government sources such as the U.S. criminal justice system.

*Includes rape, being made to sexually penetrate someone else, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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CDC's [STOP SV Technical Package](#) highlights several key strategies that communities and states can use to prioritize sexual violence prevention activities that are based on the best available evidence.

IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

CDC's research has greatly increased our understanding of what works to prevent sexual violence. One key strategy identified by CDC for preventing sexual violence focuses on training individuals to be active bystanders.

Bystander training motivates and teaches young people to:

- speak out against attitudes or behaviors that support violence;
- provide help when they see behavior that puts others at risk; and
- take steps to safely and effectively intervene when possible.

Past research has indicated these are promising ways to reduce risks for sexual violence among college students. CDC's recent research has evaluated whether these programs also prevent sexual violence in younger students.

- The *Green Dot* program trains young people to intervene when they see attitudes and behaviors that may put people at risk for violence. Although initially developed and [tested](#) with college students, a recent CDC-funded [study](#) found that *Green Dot* reduces the likelihood that young people in high school will commit sexual violence or be victims. Current CDC-funded [research](#) is:
 - testing strategies for using *Green Dot* as a prevention strategy in entire communities;
 - examining alternate methods of delivering bystander interventions; and
 - addressing the potential benefits of adding substance abuse prevention

- *Bringing in the Bystander* teaches people how to safely and effectively intervene in situations with heightened risk of sexual violence. Prior research found that the program improves knowledge of, attitudes about, and effective responses to sexual violence on college campuses. CDC is funding a [study](#) to evaluate its use with high school students.
- The *Coaching Boys into Men* program guides coaches to talk with male athletes about healthy relationships and their role in stopping violence against females. A CDC-funded [study](#) found that the program increases recognition of abusive behaviors, gender-equitable attitudes, and intentions to intervene in abusive situations. CDC is currently [evaluating](#) whether *Coaching Boys into Men* is also effective in middle schools.

CDC'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO PREVENTION RESEARCH

CDC will continue to invest in innovative research that improves what we know about sexual violence and how to prevent it, building on advances in research and practice from prior work. CDC is committed to:

- **Identifying factors** that increase or reduce perpetration of sexual violence among young people and strategies that address those factors at key developmental points.
- **Finding effective, cost-efficient strategies** that work for people at highest risk.
- **Continuing to examine the effects** of prevention approaches that are already in use in communities but have not been formally evaluated

Sexual violence is a significant but preventable public health problem. Continued evaluation of practice-based prevention programs and other promising approaches helps expand our understanding of what works to prevent sexual violence among young people and improve their health and well-being throughout life.

Learn more about how CDC's future research can identify solutions to emerging violence issues: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/researchpriorities/>.