

# *Rape Prevention and Education Program*

## **Demonstrates Important Steps Towards Preventing Sexual Violence in California Communities (2019-2021)**

**Background:** The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Program is positively impacting sexual violence (SV) prevention among participants across the State of California. The RPE Program is a part of a national sexual violence prevention program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDPH supports 24 grant-funded rape crisis centers throughout the state to conduct sexual violence prevention projects in their local communities using school-based and community mobilization approaches. As part of their RPE requirements, they collected quantitative and qualitative data from project participants. Two types of participant outcome data were collected by project facilitators from project participants: 1) pre- and post- surveys collecting quantitative data and 2) facilitated discussions providing qualitative data.

Additionally, data on the how and what was done to implement these prevention projects was collected monthly from projects, as well as tracking of community-level impacts of the RPE projects (e.g., policy or protocol changes). **This brief report represents outcome data from these rape crisis centers during their first year-and-a-half of project implementation, from February 2019 to July 2021.**



### **RPE Participant Impact | Pre/Post Surveys**

Pre-surveys were administered prior to the RPE project initial implementation, and post-surveys were administered after the RPE project had completed implementation, or in the case of ongoing RPE projects, at least once every year. Three versions of the survey were adapted for different age groups of participants: middle school students (ages 10-15), youth (i.e., high school and college age), and adults (age 24+). The majority (96.8%) of youth who participated in the survey were between the ages of 14-18 years old. These findings come from RPE project participants whose pre- and post-survey data could be matched together to see changes from before and after receiving the program. Data came from 17 agencies implementing RPE projects, 7 of which provided data from middle school students, 12 from youth, and 3 from adults. Sufficient pre/post data were available from middle school and youth participants to conduct analyses specific to these age groups. One limitation of these results is that they are not able to support a claim that RPE projects definitively caused these impacts, as this would require a more rigorous evaluation design that included a comparison group of individuals who did not receive sexual violence prevention. However, these data provide an indication of the positive impact RPE projects are having on their participants.

# TOTALS

506  
Middle School

291  
Youth

14  
Adult



## Overall

Across youth and middle school survey participants from 17 agencies, (n=767), data show that RPE projects had a significant positive impact on bystander behavioral intentions.

After completing RPE project curriculum, youth and middle school participants were both significantly more likely to indicate that they would likely or very likely intervene in the following situation:

- **How likely are you to do something to try and stop a friend of yours if they were making rude or disrespectful comments about a person's body or appearance? (A)**

↑  
(A) 2.76%  
Change

## Youth:

Pre- and post- survey data from youth participants (n=291 participants) suggest that RPE projects had a significant positive impact on youth participants' SV prevention knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and on leadership skills. These are important gains toward increasing youth's capacity toward enacting SV prevention in their communities.

### SV Prevention Attitudes

After completing RPE project curricula, youth participants were significantly more likely to express stronger agreement with the following statements:

- **Other forms of assault, like bullying and domestic violence, are connected to sexual assault. (B)**
- **If a romantic partner says they don't want to do something sexual and you still try to convince them to do it, it is a form of abuse. (C)**

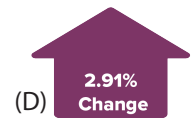
↑  
(B) 3.47%  
Change

↑  
(C) 4.24%  
Change

## SV Prevention Skills

After completing RPE project curricula, youth participants were significantly more likely to express stronger agreement with the following statement:

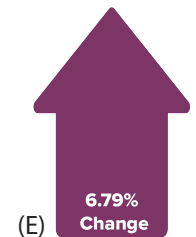
- **I know what I could do to try to stop a peer from touching, kissing, or having sex with another person who does not want to. (D)**



## Leadership Skills

After completing RPE project curricula, youth participants were significantly more likely to express stronger agreement with the following statement:

- **I know how to get people involved in making my school or community a better place. (E)**



Contrary to intentions, data also suggest RPE project youth participants experienced a reduction in feelings of belonging at school from pre to post-test (pre-test mean score: 3.02, 95%CI: 2.95-3.09; post-test mean score: 2.91, 95% CI: 2.83-2.99). Without a comparison group, it is unclear if this finding is related to participation in RPE projects or to an external factor, such as the beginning of social isolation introduced by COVID-19 in February 2020.

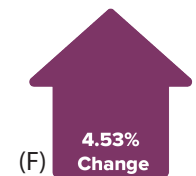
## Middle School:

Pre- and Post- survey data from middle school participants (N=506 participants) suggests that RPE projects had a significant positive impact on their intentions to enact positive bystander behavior and community recognition of SV as a problem. Data come from seven middle school RPE projects, with 57% of the data coming from one RPE project.

## Bystander Intervention

After completing RPE project curriculum, middle school participants were significantly more likely to indicate likelihood to intervene in the following situation:

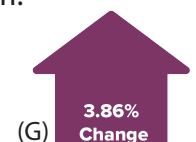
- **How likely are you to do something to try and stop a friend of yours if they were making rude or disrespectful comments about a person's body or appearance? (F)**



## Community Recognition of SV

After completing RPE project curriculum, middle school participants were significantly more likely to express agreement that their community is recognizing sexual harassment and bullying as a problem:

- **I have heard people in my school talk about sexual harassment or bullying (peer abuse) as a problem. (G)**



## Qualitative Assessment of RPE Project Impact

RPE project facilitators also asked youth and middle school RPE participants qualitative questions about the impact of participation in the project during April – July 2021 (majority of data from May 2021). The data from these discussions were compiled and analyzed for emergent themes by staff at the Center on Gender Equity and Health at UC San Diego. The main themes that emerged for these youth RPE participants were consciousness raising around social justice, making a difference in the community, healthy relationships, bystander intervention, and community connection. All quotes included are from youth RPE participants, reported by RPE staff.

“Although what we have been discussing is sort of presented as a local/community-based problem, I can see how issues such as sexism, sexual abuse, domestic [violence] and such in [community] are simply an embodiment of a larger scale national, even global issue. The connections that can be made through issues, even as simple as colorism, can be traced to the smallest corners of the world. Therefore, the thing that stuck out to me the most is how much these problems are present in each one of our lives



subconsciously,”

consciously, directly, or indirectly.

**CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING AROUND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

“ I have been able to learn more about the culture surrounding sexual violence, how pornography and society’s perception/response perpetuates rape culture. I also learned more about the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community, and women of color in that community: what they face and how they are at a disadvantage. From this knowledge I am able to better advocate for things I am passionate about when I have a better overall understanding of it all.”

"I am definitely a lot more likely to speak up against both sexual violence and harassment because I recognize I could be the impact that changes a situation or the way someone thinks. ”

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY**

“From learning as a Youth Ambassador I have made healthier relationships because I have gained perspective and information that has sparked vital conversations. For example, my aunt and I recently discussed gender based violence based on what I have learned from [RPE project]. I can use [the information] to make my relationships healthier by opening up conversations that help us to talk deeply and gain respect for one another.”

“I have been able to have healthier relationships because I realize the signs of what an unhealthy one is especially because of what we learned during teen dating violence month. I learned a lot about myself because of the gender unit we covered and that has made me more comfortable with people. I learned that there are different types of abuse and it is okay to seek help. It is important that we treat ourselves and others with respect. ”

**HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

“During our meeting we were often given scenarios and had to point out the red flags in each situation, this helped me pick up on instances of harassment that I may have not noticed before I did this exercise. It helped me quickly and effectively assess a situation. This undoubtedly will be a crucial tool to use throughout life.”

“I always intervene when I see something and it is likely that I will continue doing so because it can save lives when you speak up. ”

**BYSTANDER INTERVENTION**

“Being in [RPE project] has helped be able to engage with different types of people that I would've never interacted with before. It has opened up my mind to view life in a different perspective and view people's situations in more depth. It has helped me feel more connected with adults because I am able to have more mature conversations with them about topics that most teenagers won't talk about or aren't very educated on”

“Based on what I learned in [RPE project] has helped me with feeling like I'm not alone. It makes me feel powerful and makes me feel like I can change the world. It has helped my family understand what I have gone through more and help me to connect with them more. ”

**COMMUNITY CONNECTION 5**

## Conclusion

Despite major disruptions to project implementation and data collection introduced by the COVID-19 Pandemic, data suggests that **CDPH's RPE projects are positively impacting youth sexual violence prevention in the state of California.** While COVID-19 introduced many barriers, it also opened space for creativity, innovation and expansion in data collection strategies for RPE projects, including more widespread adoption of online data collection and the addition of qualitative data collection. Survey findings provided quantitative data to evidence the RPE Program's positive impact on SV attitudes, prevention skills, and bystander behavior intentions. Qualitative data also suggest that RPE projects provided participants with a sense of belonging. Narrative data also revealed the potential benefits RPE projects had on community connection, suggesting that RPE projects may have provided participants with a sense of belonging. The qualitative data revealed that RPE participants were impacted by social unrest, recognized the importance of their own actions in making a difference, and understood what constitutes a healthy vs. unhealthy relationship. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data provides powerful evidence of the strengths of RPE projects in preventing sexual violence in California communities.

