

Strengthening the prevention support system in CDC's Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program

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Publication info: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2008. 3330980.

[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: Through the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program, the Center's for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides funding, translates research findings, provides technical assistance, develops tools and other products, and conducts program monitoring of state health agencies functioning as intermediary organizations within a prevention support system. (Wandersman et al., 2008).

The aims of this dissertation were to (1) Create an assessment tool defining the capacities needed to support the implementation of priority, evidence-based sexual assault prevention strategies; (2) Assess select priority needs and capacities of intermediary organizations to support this implementation; and (3) Develop a strategy to enhance the prevention support system capacity of intermediary organizations.

A systematic needs assessment, including pre-assessment, assessment and utilization phases, was conducted. (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995) The assessment focused on the capacity of state health agencies, functioning as intermediary organizations, to support knowledge exchange with and among the community-based organizations implementing sexual assault prevention priorities. Knowledge exchange involves interaction, and results in mutual learning through the process of planning, producing, disseminating and applying existing or new research or innovation in decision-making. ("Glossary of Knowledge Exchange Terms") When priority, evidence based strategies are introduced, as new innovations, the knowledge exchange capacity within a system must be considered. (Bero et al., 1998).

A multiple, holistic case study design was used to examine relevant constructs e.g., trust, organizational climate, organizational support, shared understanding and resources. This research identified gaps in organizational knowledge exchange capacity, resulting in specific recommendations related to the role and function of CDC and state health agencies as a part of the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Prevention Support System.

The resulting plan would establish a National Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Knowledge Exchange program policy. The recommended actions address organizational supports and system change within the CDC; build individual knowledge exchange capacity; build prevention support system knowledge exchange capacity; and build networks of peers and enhance communication. If successful, the improvements resulting from this policy may serve as an example of the organizational knowledge exchange capacity required to assure that public health advances are effectively implemented and lead to improvements in the lives of the American public.

Links: [Linking Service](#)

Subject: Public health; Rape; Prevention; Government agencies; Studies;

Classification: 0573: Public health

Identifier / keyword: Health and environmental sciences, Prevention support, Rape Prevention and Education

Pages: n/a

Number of pages: 319

Publication year: 2008

Degree date: 2008

School code: 0153

Source: DAI-B 69/11, May 2009

Place of publication: Ann Arbor

Country of publication: United States

ISBN: 9780549880783

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Committee member: Baker, Edward, Blase, Karen, Wandersman, Abraham, Wells, Rebecca

University/institution: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Department: Health Policy & Administration: Doctoral (residential)

University location: United States -- North Carolina

Degree: Dr.P.H.

Source type: Dissertations & Theses

Language: English

Document type: Dissertation/Thesis

Dissertation/thesis number: 3330980

ProQuest document ID: 304532780

Document URL:

<http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304532780?accountid=14244>

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Database: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text

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