

## *Executive Summary*

According to the “Rape in Arkansas Report” an extremely conservative estimate of the prevalence of rape in Arkansas is that 12.4%, or 1 in 8 women, have been victims of a completed forcible rape at some point in their lifetime (NVAWPRC, 2003). This does not include other types of sexual violence nor male or child victimization.

The consequences of sexual violence are devastating not only for victims but for families and friends of victims. Unfortunately, sexual violence is an issue that is often ignored because of attitudes which blame rape victims rather than the perpetrator. Other social norms including the cultural valuation of masculine aggression, extremely low status of women in Arkansas and the violent, degrading depictions of women in the media not only tolerate, but promote violence against women.

The Arkansas Department of Health currently has an interagency agreement with the Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence (ACCARDV), a division of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), to carry out the goals and objectives of the Rape Prevention and Education Program aimed at preventing sexual violence in Arkansas. In November 2007, ACCARDV and ADH began a two year comprehensive planning process to strengthen efforts for sexual violence primary prevention.

The purpose of the comprehensive planning process was to assess current programs and develop future programs that are multi-faceted, evidenced-based and theory-based. These efforts include public health behavior change principles and address multiple levels of the social ecological model for comprehensive primary prevention strategies and activities.

The Sexual Violence Prevention Planning Committee was developed to steer the comprehensive primary prevention planning process. An extensive Needs and Resources Assessment was conducted gathering demographic data, assessments from funded and non-funded prevention programs, and data on the magnitude of sexual violence in Arkansas, as well as risk and protective factors.

In addition to targeting the general population living in RPE funded areas of Arkansas, the Committee chose selected populations, which are at higher risk for sexual violence, which include people with disabilities and college students. Given limited resources, one goal for each population was developed. Once the goals and outcome statements were developed, strategies were selected to help us achieve our goals.

The result of this extensive process is a five to eight year plan that addresses societal and community levels of the social ecological model through strategies that have demonstrated the potential ability to prevent first-time perpetration and victimization. These strategies also seek to promote protective factors and reduce risk factors for sexual violence. Information in this plan has been provided to strengthen the evidence of these strategies in an effort to implement strategies that are relevant and feasible for our state.

The main goal of this comprehensive plan is to change the social norms that promote violence against women in an effort to finally end this problem. It is our hope the following goals, developed by the SVPPC, will help us achieve our vision of eliminating sexual violence in Arkansas.

- Decrease social norms that promote tolerance of sexual violence in RPE funded areas of Arkansas.
- Decrease cultural norms on college campuses supportive of sexual violence.
- To promote social norms within state agencies and programs that are supportive of primary prevention of sexual violence for people with disabilities.

Additionally, several goals were developed to help Arkansas funded programs build capacity to implement the comprehensive plan:

- Increase cultural competence among sexual violence primary prevention partners.
- To increase available resources and support for sexual violence primary prevention in Arkansas.

Numerous entities and agencies have demonstrated support for the Arkansas Comprehensive Primary Prevention Plan through the number of hours and extraordinary effort given to attend meetings and participate in planning activities over the two year period. This plan has also had the support of both Governor Mike Beebe and Attorney General Dustin McDaniel, who provided letters of support. With this support, we hope to achieve our vision:

*Elimination of sexual violence in Arkansas achieved through comprehensive and sustainable primary prevention strategies that ensure cultural awareness and promote societal norms of sexual responsibility and respect.*