

Youth-centered Environmental Shift (YES!) Program for Middle Schools

Background

Sexual violence (SV) begins early and can have long lasting health impacts on youth.¹

The 2023 Washington Healthy Youth Survey found that:

- 11% of 8th grade students have experienced some form of sexual violence.
- 19% of 8th graders have seen a peer pressure someone else to kiss, touch, or have sex when they did not want to.²

Program Vision

The goal of the YES! program is to create a culture where students are emotionally and physically safe, supported, and free of all forms of abuse, specifically sexual violence.

YES! is an innovative SV prevention program created by OSPI.

- ✓ Evidence-informed
- ✓ Uses community-level, primary prevention strategies
- ✓ Relies on youth voice and leadership
- ✓ Changes school climate to protect against SV

Schools offer a natural and influential setting for SV prevention among youth—by intervening early in this setting, SV can be prevented before it begins. YES! works to transform the whole school so that the policies, culture, and physical space protect against violence victimization and perpetration.

YES! Program

The following are the main program components that are spread out over approximately a two-year implementation cycle:

Develop a School Support Team (SST)

- This team will undergo training and implement YES! at the school level.
- Has at least one member in each role: administrator, educator, school nurse/counselor, paraeducator, and district staff.
- SSTs should also involve students and parents/community members.

¹ Basile KC, Smith SG, et al. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence". Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>. Accessed August 26, 2024.

² Healthy Youth Survey 2023: Statewide Results, Grade 8". Washington State Health Care Authority, Department of Health, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Liquor and Cannabis Board, February 2024. <https://www.askhys.net/SurveyResults/GetReport?year=2023&reportLevel=2&reportLabel=Grade%208>. Accessed August 15, 2024.



School Climate & Environmental Shift

- Implement Washington State Department of Health's (DOH) ["It's About Respect"](#) social norms campaign.
- Use Hot Spot Mapping to score the physical, social, cultural environment of school.

Revise/Implement Protocols & Plans

- Review policies and procedures (e.g., mandated reporting, dress code, harassment and bullying, etc.).
- Revise and develop building-level protocols and plans based on review.

YES! Program Components

- School Support Team (SST) Development
- School Climate and Environmental Shift
- Protocols and Plans Revision and Implementation

Secondary Outcomes

Risk and Protective Factors

- Address school climate
- Decrease attitudes towards violence
- Increase bystander behaviors and intentions
- Increase academic achievement and decrease discipline

Primary Outcomes

Adolescent Violence Outcomes – Victimization/Perpetration

- Decrease in sexual violence (including sexual harassment)
- Decrease in teen dating violence
- Decrease in bullying and other youth violence



Support for the YES! Program

“The Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA) is enthusiastic about the YES! Program and is looking forward to their involvement. WSSDA is hoping to learn from participating schools to see how to better serve schools throughout Washington.”

–WSSDA

“The YES! Program was selected as one of the strongest [promising programs] from a very highly competitive process, illustrating the significance and strengths of the project and benefit it will have for the community. Through this project, more will be learned about preventing sexual violence among middle school students using a school-level approach, examining policies and norms. This is a novel approach and CDC believes this research has the potential to advance our understanding of how to make schools safer.”

– Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Rape Prevention and Education Program

“What excites me about this project is learning together and creating innovative, proactive practices to ensure student safety in all areas of their lives.” –WA School Principal, YES! Pilot School

