

# CASA House Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPSS)

## Project outline

The CASA House Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools utilises a **whole-of-school community** approach to the prevention of sexual assault. The Program requires **Principal-driven** commitment to sustaining the program and to engaging a cross-section of the school community.

The aims of the Prevention Program are to:

- Reduce the incidence of sexual assault in school communities
- Establish safe environments for young people to discuss relationships, consent & communication
- Enhance young people's knowledge of and access to support
- Enhance the capacity of secondary schools to respond to sexual assault.

There are several key components of the Program:

- ▶ staff professional development (all teaching and support staff)
- ▶ middle school curriculum (year 9/10)
- ▶ Train the Trainer workshops
- ▶ Peer Educator program (senior school).

The 'middle school curriculum' is conducted in a "workshop" atmosphere of open dialogue and discussion and sessions are delivered by trained school staff and guest speakers from CASA House and Victoria Police.

This Program is conducted by CASA House in partnership with secondary schools and includes ongoing evaluation.

Action area (eg. research monitoring and evaluation, direct participation program, community strengthening, communication and social marketing, advocacy, legislative and policy reform, organisational and workforce development)

Direct participation program & Community strengthening.

Location/catchment area (eg. Shire of Yarra Ranges, DHS Southern Region)

DHS North-Western region.

Setting (primary/secondary school, community centre, local government, media, sporting club, faith community, workplace, cyberspace, other)

Secondary schools.

Population group (eg. year 9 students, young people 12-15, children 5-11, parents, teachers, whole school community etc)

Whole school community.

Level targeted (individual, organisational, community, societal, other)

Individual, Organisational & Community

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**Background:**

CASA House is a department of the Royal Women's Hospital. It is a government funded organisation that provides services on a 24 hour basis. CASA House is committed to ensuring that the silence which surrounds sexual assault continues to be broken and that victim/survivors are provided with the necessary support.

CASA House services include:

- Crisis care for recent assault
- Counselling, support & advocacy
- Support groups
- Support for families & friends
- Professional consultation
- Education & training
- Research & public advocacy
- School-based prevention programs.

The CASA House SAPPSS has been operating since 2004 with funding provided by a range of agencies including DHS and VicHealth. The project was initiated in response to ongoing requests to the agency from schools for prevention programs and also in response to research and evaluation suggesting that effective prevention requires ongoing partnerships and long-term, sustainable models. It has developed over time in consultation with and based on feedback provided by school communities.

**Project outcomes:**

Through the combination of staff training, curriculum development and student leadership, our whole-school program aims to equip and enable schools to:

- **Prevent** sexual assault – by promoting student safety & wellbeing and encourage respectful behaviours; and
- **Respond** to sexual assault – by ensuring school response to sexual assault shapes positive outcomes for victim/survivors.

**How has this been evaluated?**

The 'middle school curriculum' is *only one component* of this framework; however it is the component that has been most thoroughly evaluated. Evaluation is conducted at all stages of this component of the Prevention Program, including:

- before, during and immediately after program [stage 1]

- medium-term (6 months after program) [stage 2]
- long-term (1-2 years after program) [stage 3].

The staff professional development and curriculum training components are also evaluated immediately after delivery and long-term in consultation with school communities.

### How has the project developed over time?

The CASA House SAPPSS has developed over time in consultation with and based on feedback provided by school communities. The most significant shift has been towards the 'train the trainer' model which enables schools to incorporate the program into curriculum and to develop ownership of the prevention of sexual assault.

### What has been learnt?

A number of key principles have emerged regarding school-based violence prevention programs in regard to developing:

- ❖ Whole school response to sexual assault
- ❖ Sustainable cultural shifts across school community
- ❖ Effective engagement with young people
- ❖ Evaluation.

These principles include:

- Clearly identified theoretical framework
- Explicit gender focus
- Social norms, whole-school or whole-community focus (i.e. not just targeted at young people)
- Continuous and consistent provision of programs (i.e. not one-offs)
- Sustainability and ownership over time – including training of school staff and program facilitators
- Promoting positive behaviours and alternatives as well as naming and understanding violence (e.g. Strengths-based approach)
- Ongoing evaluation – including long-term follow-up
- Long-term funding to enable this.