

CASA House Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPPSS) Report

Executive Summary

This report describes the development and evaluation of the CASA House Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Secondary Schools (SAPPSS). It is intended to be used as a summary and a guide for organisations wishing to initiate, develop, monitor and evaluate school-based violence prevention programs and other initiatives focused on young people and their communities. It may also be of use to policy and decision-makers in the sectors of health, education and violence against women.

SAPPSS is, in the first instance, a program to reduce the incidence and impacts of sexual assault by addressing its underlying causes and by promoting respectful behaviours. 'Sexual assault' is defined as any sexual behaviour that makes a person feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened and includes sexual coercion, pressured sex, sexual harassment, rape and indecent assault. Sexual assault occurs within a broader context of structural gender inequality and is seen as part of a continuum of gender-based violence resulting from this. As 'prevention' targets the underlying causes of this violence, the principles and methods used in SAPPSS may be applicable to programs targeted at other types of gender-based violence, such as homophobia, emotional abuse and intimate partner violence.

The key recommendation of this report is that all Victorian CASAs be provided with ongoing government funding to implement a long-term, sustainable, whole-of-school sexual assault prevention program with schools in their service regions. Ongoing funding for school-based work enables CASAs to maintain ongoing partnerships with schools and also to ensure that prevention programs are implemented in a way that is appropriate and applicable to the needs and interests of each school community and each region of Victoria. In terms of addressing the whole school community, the SAPPSS should continue to focus on enabling the school community to sustain the Program and its effects over time. This whole-school approach includes ongoing staff training; development of policies and procedures; resources and support to sustain the incorporation of the student program into curriculum. Recommendations are also made about future additions to SAPPSS and areas for further evaluation.

Section 1 - From workshops to working together outlines the campaign that led to CASA House's increasing engagement with secondary schools and the development of SAPPSS from 1999-2007. The 'Introduction' describes the rationale for a school-based sexual assault prevention program and the current policy context around the primary prevention of violence. This section also includes an account of the 'spin-offs' from SAPPSS including the No Means No Show and the Peer Educator Program.

Section 2 - Evaluation of the CASA House SAPPSS describes the evaluation of the student component of the Program. This section includes a Literature Review and highlights some of the gaps in current analysis of school-based prevention. The method and results of all stages of evaluation - immediately after the program, 6 months after program and 12 months-2 years after program - are described and the results compared with the few similar studies. This section identifies the key principles and enabling factors for the effectiveness of SAPPSS and recommends areas for future evaluation.

Based on the findings in Section 2, **Section 3 - Good practice guidelines for school-based violence prevention** lists the suggested principles and parameters for school-based initiatives that seek to address gender-based violence. SAPPSS entails a partnership approach to school-based programs, hence the principles in Section 3 describe how schools and specialist agencies can engage in an ongoing process of shared responsibilities and benefits. Section 3 also addresses some of the key questions to consider in the design of evaluation for school-based violence prevention programs.

Highlights

Section 1 - From workshops to working together

The initial review of existing school-based violence prevention programs and related research found that some key principles and recommendations were emerging in the field of sexual violence prevention. Perhaps most outstanding was the importance of a 'whole-school approach', signalling a shift away from prevention efforts solely targeting students or targeting a select group of students.

The use of a whole-school approach was consistent with CASA House's feminist philosophy in that it addressed the whole community rather than individuals. In addition it incorporated the responsibility of adults and school leaders to promote young people's safety and wellbeing. ... A whole-school approach sends a clear message to students that the issue is serious and that young people are *not* solely responsible for addressing the issue of sexual assault.

'The topic was often rushed and staff did not have the expertise, training or resources required to go into depth ... We have improved our knowledge and understanding and are feeling very comfortable and confident in delivering the program in the future.'

Section 2 - Evaluation of the CASA House SAPPSS

There are three categories identified in SAPPSS evaluation and most include assessment against pre-program testing:

- immediately after the program (Category 1)
- 6 months after program (Category 2), and
- 12 months-2 years after program (Category 3).

The evaluation was conducted using mixed methods, including written surveys and questionnaires, focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews. Some informal observations were also recorded as part of the evaluation.

In summary, the evaluations indicated that young people's understanding of sexual assault issues is enhanced by the SAPPSS student curriculum, as is their skill and ability to discuss those issues in an open, respectful and appropriate way. The evaluations also indicated that these changes are best sustained in the context of multiple and ongoing initiatives to address sexual assault within the school community.

'I didn't really know how to really talk. And most guys don't really know how to communicate well enough. Sometimes it could be you just don't know what to say so you think 'who cares, I'll just shut up in case I say something wrong.'

'I think some girls are comfortable enough to have sex but they're not comfortable enough to tell their partner what they want in it or what they want from it. So like they'll go though with it but then they'll be more like it's all about him sort of thing.'

Section 3 - Good practice guidelines for school-based violence prevention

The key to the sustainability of a prevention program and to the continuity of cultural change is the development and maintenance of an ongoing partnership between the agency and the school.

This allows the agency to be flexible and *responsive* to schools' changing needs and also to be pro-active in providing programs and materials. In addition, it allows schools to recognise the agency as providing specialist knowledge and advice, to understand the services available and to access people they know and trust when dealing with sensitive issues.

