

## Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

University of Southern California

### LGBTQ+ Violence Prevention and Intervention Services

#### Relevant Rubric Areas:

*Bystander Intervention Programs; Audience-specific Anti-sexual Harassment Education; Prevention Program or Toolkits; Trauma-Informed Response and Education Programs*

#### Description of Work:

In June 2020, the University of Southern California (USC) created a new position for a full-time advocate to provide trauma-informed and culturally sensitive supportive services for LGBTQ+ students, which was funded by a grant from the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). The CalOES grant also allows USC to designate a half-time safety officer trained in trauma-informed approaches to implement ongoing training and consultation to other campus safety officers who may work with LGBTQ+ students. All intervention and prevention activities for this grant will be guided by the USC Campus Coordinated Response Team (CCRT), an innovative, multidisciplinary team charged with developing, implementing, and overseeing various methods for comprehensive sexual harassment and assault prevention, and composed of campus and community partners who have expertise in providing services to the LGBTQ+ community. The CCRT is sponsored by USC Student Health and USC's Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX (EEO-TIX), and includes approximately 30 members from campus partners, including Residential Education, Disability Services, Public Safety, USC Student Health, Student Activities, Undergraduate and Graduate Student Government, Threat Response, Crisis Intervention, Office of International Students, LGBTQ+ Student Center, and Student Cultural Affairs.

The need for a full-time advocate was first identified through the 2015 Association of American Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey, which revealed that LGBTQ+ students experienced higher rates of sexual violence and lower rates of service provision compared to other student cohorts. LGBTQ+ students vocalized their feelings that campus services did not reflect their voices. USC's Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) office, in partnership with the local rape crisis center—YWCA Sexual Assault Crisis Services Program—applied for the CalOES grant to increase USC's ability to provide culturally relevant services to LGBTQ+ students. The full-time advocate works closely with RSVP's violence prevention team and since coming on board in 2020 has developed new prevention and outreach approaches and materials; the goal is to train USC's entire Department of Public Safety in culturally appropriate and trauma-informed practices when responding to students who have been impacted by sexual and relationship violence. The grant has allowed the CCRT to focus on the LGBTQ+ student cohort and develop more specialized approaches for other student cohorts that have high rates of sexual victimization.

## **Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

Recruitment efforts of staff for this grant were very intentional and purposeful to make sure a competitive and diverse pool of applicants would be interviewed. Local organizations that work with LGBTQ+ populations received the job description, along with the CCRT members, to ensure that applicants had expertise in this area and also identified as LGBTQ+. This recruitment tends to take a longer time, but is a necessary practice to make sure that the pool of applicants is diverse. Once the right candidate was identified and hired after several months, RSVP received the institutional funding to expand their prevention team and then utilized the grant to onboard the candidate to the prevention team. This step also allowed RSVP to recruit a clinician who has expertise in working with LGBTQ+ survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and violence. In addition, RSVP has been able to hire a Masters in Social Work (MSW) clinician and a Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) intern who both identify as gay and transgender, respectively, to further expand and deepen our therapeutic work with LGBTQ+ students. Furthermore, RSVP recruited a second advocate with expertise in LGBTQ+ issues in order to fill a vacant position; accordingly, RSVP now has LGBTQ+ representation across all of RSVP's program components.

Additionally, since 2018, RSVP has continuously sought to review and update to reflect the best practices in the field the education programs it offers to the USC community through a series of prevention workshops on affirmative consent, healthy relationships, bystander intervention, and sexual harassment. These workshops are required for all students. All incoming students start with the affirmative consent workshop, then in their second year take the healthy relationship workshop, and in their third year take the bystander intervention workshop. Moreover, all graduate and professional students are required to take a workshop on sexual harassment. All of these workshops are inclusive of all student social identities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. RSVP also has started bystander intervention workshops for faculty and staff using a Train-the-Trainer model for sustainability of bystander intervention skills. This training has been tailored as well for various student cohorts, such as athletes, marching band, student registered organizations, Greek life, etc. For USC's undergraduate students, sexual harassment is included in their bystander intervention workshops, which focus more on harassment by peers than harassment in professional or working environments, which tend to impact our graduate students more. Based on research, we strongly believe that bystander intervention training is key to changing the culture on campus and holding the campus community accountable for addressing all harassing and violent behaviors.

RSVP prevention efforts include sex and gender harassment approaches. Many times, students experience harassment based on their sexual preferences and their gender identities. Gender-based harassment and sexual preference harassment in its various forms, such as verbal, nonverbal, graphic, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostile conduct based on sex, sex-stereotyping, sexual orientation, or gender identity that can lead to sexual violence, it is addressed in the workshops and in other educational materials.

## Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

In addition to the above, RSVP has a peer educational program, Violence Outreach Intervention and Community Empowerment (VOICE), and Masculinity Outreach and Volunteer Engagement (MOVE) where student volunteers are trained to provide informal support and education on trauma and gender-based violence to peers.

Through the work of the newly-created CCRT, a toolkit was also developed to educate the campus community, including students, faculty and staff, on issues of discrimination and bias regarding students who identify as LGBTQ+. This toolkit, once fully approved, will be disseminated to various academic programs and department, student affairs, student health and others to educate on transforming their business and educational practices to be more inclusive of this student cohort. The educational toolkit provides a historical context, explains trauma impacts of bias, and includes steps and tips to recognize and change biased behaviors.

All of the above efforts have been implemented by RSVP through a trauma-informed, as well as feminist framework as appropriate to the population, that recognizes power/privilege dynamics, cultural sensitivity, respect, empowerment, strength-based, and non-retraumatizing as best practices in campus response to students who have experienced harm. It is important to note that RSVP supports all victims and survivors regardless of gender identity. RSVP has begun educating faculty, staff, including USC's Department of Public Safety officers, about the role that trauma plays in the lives of college students and how to respond to reports of harm and violence that supports and centers encounters on the needs and perspective of the survivor. The USC campus response approach to reports of harassment and sexual or relationship violence is one that supports the whole student from the impact of trauma. USC's RSVP advocates are trained as "first responders" who also provide critical confidential supportive services that include crisis intervention, linkage, navigation through campus systems, accompaniment to off-campus service providers, and similar support. The RSVP advocates have received extensive training on trauma-informed practices. USC's entire student healthcare system has adopted a trauma-informed culture. Trauma-informed workshops have been conducted for USC's academic senate and student affairs to ensure that students receive appropriate support throughout their academic careers whether they disclose a trauma history or not. Additionally, RSVP developed materials to educate on culture-specific and trauma-informed approaches in law enforcement investigations, including partnering with Los Angeles Police Department LGBTQ+ representatives to deepen their knowledge on working with LGBTQ+ college students from a trauma-informed perspective in relation to reports of sexual and relationship violence.

Finally, the CCRT has reviewed communication policies and practices to ensure that the language is inclusive on our student services websites. As a result of this review, websites are undergoing changes to language, visuals, content, etc. to ensure that the lived experiences and voices of LGBTQ+ students are reflected on USC websites. This was accomplished through a series of focus groups with LGBTQ+ students who had shared feedback that a lack of

## **Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

transparency and clear information had been a significant impediment to them accessing support services.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

**Point of Contact Name:** Brenda Ingram, EdD, MSW, LCSW, Program Director, RSVP

**Email Address for Point of Contact:** [BrendaKaye.Ingram@med.usc.edu](mailto:BrendaKaye.Ingram@med.usc.edu)