



GROWING a SAFER GARDEN STATE

Cultivating safety and respect requires thoughtful action and planning. We must commit ourselves to understanding root causes of violence and exploring new paths toward justice and equity. *Growing a Safer Garden State* means we care about what goes into the soil, how growth occurs, and how each plant thrives in the ecosystem we have worked hard to create.



Assess the roots.

Many different forms of violence share causes and contexts.^{1 2} When we examine how the root causes of sexual violence are intertwined with others, we can begin to uncover harmful elements that have stunted growth. Some norms, such as honor and integrity, help us stay focused, but others like inequity and disrespect must be pulled out and replaced with something new.

Nurture the Soil.

Social change can – and does – happen everywhere, but we must exercise kindness and patience. This may look like enhancing current law enforcement training to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully investigate cases of sexual assault. We could also create more nurturing environments through building strong service provision standards so every survivor is met with a consistent level of care throughout the state.

Plenty of Positive Energy.

We can enhance the effectiveness of our efforts by promoting positive connections.³ While it can be hard to find opportunities for this in every role, the important goal to keep in mind is building strong bonds between community providers and individuals. This may include ensuring a building is accessible to everyone in the community by installing a ramp or lift; efforts could also include bringing on and supporting bilingual and multilingual staff who reflect the linguistic diversity of the community.

Allow New Growth.

We have a lot of hopes for the future. Sometimes those hopes turn out as we envisioned, but more often than not things look very different. This is OK. Communities find the solutions that best suit their assets and experiences – just like a plant moving through the soil. Patience helps us maintain perspective and take in “the big picture” before rushing to judgment.



Share Your Harvest.

Innovation comes from listening to new and existing partners, synthesizing best practices, and learning lessons from missteps and challenges. Sharing what we’ve learned along the way helps us stay accountable to the communities we serve and to one another as collaborators. Communicating successes and experiments with others also connects us to the national sexual violence prevention movement.⁴

Clear the path.

Existing patterns and procedures have offered us guidance, but may not be serving our change efforts. Organizational policies regarding gender equity, sexual harassment, inclusive leadership, and community accountability may not be able to grow within certain environments. How and where can we prune or clear away some of the conditions that are no longer serving us?



¹ Wilkins, N., Tsao, B., Hertz, M., Davis, R., Klevens, J. (2014). Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oakland, CA: Prevention Institute. Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/2oEGrBZ>

² Pinderhughes H, Davis R, Williams M. (2015). Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma. Prevention Institute, Oakland CA. Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/2ngelg7>

³ Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., & Davino, K. (2003). “What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs.” *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.

⁴ Safe States Alliance. (2017). *Stories from the Field: Preventing Sexual Violence*. Atlanta, GA: Safe States Alliance. Retrieved from: <http://safestates.site-ym.com/page/RPEStories>