

*We See **POSSIBILITIES** not **LIMITATIONS!***

RAPE CRISIS

INTERVENTION OF

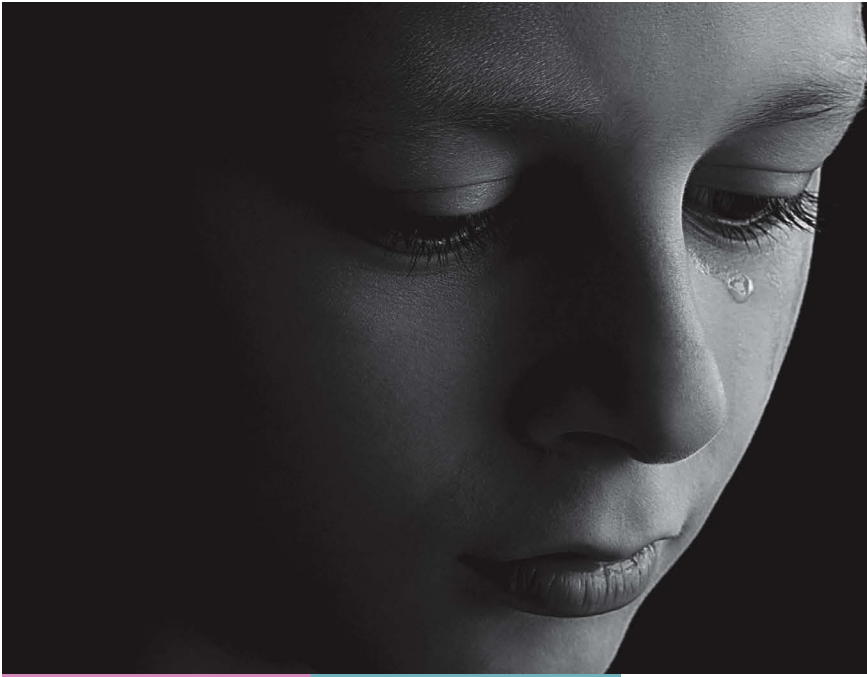
NORTH CENTRAL

CALIFORNIA*

has been supporting
sexual assault survivors
successfully for
47 years.

Learn why that is
important for our entire
Tri-County community.

*aka Rape Crisis Intervention & Prevention



BELIEVING SURVIVORS

Rape Crisis Intervention uplifts survivors and communities

BY ANNE STOKES

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES STUDY

Most of RCI's clients have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, which are defined as traumatic events that occur during childhood such as:

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Physical or emotional neglect
- Household challenges such as domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse in the home

! LONG-LASTING EFFECTS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ACEs are tragically common and can have life-long repercussions.

- **61% of adults** have experienced at least one type of ACE; 16% of adults have experienced four or more.
- **Extreme and prolonged toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development**, adversely affecting attention, decision-making, learning and stress response. In adulthood, this can affect employment, finances and the ability to form healthy relationships. Such struggles are commonly passed on to new generations.
- **Several leading causes of death are associated with ACEs**, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and mental illness, including depression and suicide. ACEs also contribute to chronic conditions such as addiction and substance abuse.

According to a 2012 study by VALORUS, formerly the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the tangible costs of sexual violence in California—including medical and mental health care, investigations and victims' services—totaled over \$9 billion. When the intangible costs like lost work productivity and earnings as well as increased risks of substance abuse and suicide are included, those costs exploded to \$140 billion.

The report also shows that prevention programs could create substantial savings: up to \$163,800 for *every* prevented rape of an adult and \$227,700 for *every* prevented rape or sexual assault of a child. Despite those numbers—and the 948,074 people who reported being sexually assaulted—state, local and federally funded prevention programs make up 0.1% of total government spending.

I want people to realize that survivors are everywhere.

Rocky Cruz
Assistant Executive Director/Program Director,
Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California

In Butte, Glenn and Tehama counties, Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California is reaching out a hand to survivors and their communities. Rocky Cruz, Assistant Executive Director/Program Director, says their mission is to empower survivors.

"We give them options so they can make their own decisions. Because their power and control was taken from them, the best way to start getting it back is by making decisions, not us telling them what to do," she says. "Whatever their decision, we support them."

RCI provides direct client services for survivors and their loved ones as well as community education, outreach

and prevention programs with the goal of eradicating sexual violence and creating a safer community.

"It's hard for people to stop looking at the survivor's actions and not the predator's behavior: Instead of teaching 'Don't get raped!' we need to teach 'Don't rape!'" she says. "That's something that really needs to change."

All of RCI's services are free and provided by confidential sexual assault counselors for survivors, family, friends, partners and the community at large, including:

- 24-hour crisis hotline at 530-342-RAPE [7273], collect calls accepted
- Follow-up and continuity client services
- One-on-one counseling and support groups
- Advocacy and accompaniment for forensic medical exams, law enforcement interviews or pretext calls, court proceedings and more
- Information and resource referrals
- Education programs for adults and youths from preschool through high school (NOTE: We are mandated reporters when teaching child abuse prevention on school campuses)

For Cruz, RCI's mission is a personal one: She is a survivor of intergenerational incest, domestic violence, trafficking and addiction herself.

"I ran away from home when I was 13 because it was safer in the streets than it was at home," she says. "I want people to realize that survivors are everywhere, we are anyone, but because we blame (survivors), people are afraid to get help. We help survivors by believing them, validating their feelings, and by teaching them not to minimize their trauma experience. Our goal is to teach our survivors they have a voice and help them move from being a victim to a Survivor to a Thriver!"

For more information, visit www.rapecrisis.org or call 530-891-1331 or 877-452-9588 (in Butte and Glenn counties), 530-529-3980 (Tehama County) or 530-824-3982 (calling from Corning).



FINDING SUPPORT

Childhood sexual abuse survivor finds help at RCI

BY ANNE STOKES

Ruth is a survivor. As a young child she endured a very unstable life, suffering abandonment, bouncing from one home to another and being molested by her father. She says that childhood trauma followed her into adulthood, contributing to mental health struggles as well as a dysfunctional marriage.

I learned about being an enabler, boundaries...and that I wasn't a horrible person.

Ruth
Survivor and client of Rape Crisis Intervention

"I've had a really rough life [and] I think that contributed to it from the very beginning," she says. "My mother abandoned me when I was 4 years old and my sister was 2½—I was feeding her out of garbage cans. Then I went to live with my great-great grandmother,...then we went to live with my grandmother, and then there was stepmother No. 1 and stepmother No. 2. A lot of bad stuff happened to me."

Rocky Cruz, Assistant Executive Director/Program

Director of Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California, says Ruth is not alone—95% of their clients were sexually violated as children.

"A lot of children who are raised in incestuous families will gravitate toward domestic violence and people who are overpowering and who hurt them because that's what they're used to," she explains. "They never learned where they end and someone else begins. They're who will be re-victimized over and over again."

While Ruth says she's been through counseling and other supportive services before, she feels it didn't help her. But she says RCI counselors helped her work through a lot of issues, including teaching her coping strategies.

"I learned about being an enabler, boundaries...and that I wasn't a horrible person, that I wasn't bad," she says. "Not only was (my counselor) Michelle very non-judgmental, but she was very patient and supportive of me. I never felt judged by her and I could really open up and tell her my heart."

Today, Ruth says she's a much happier person who is able to set boundaries and stand up for herself and her loved ones, including her grandson, who lives with her.

"I try to touch base with Michelle at least every year just to let her know...I really do appreciate everything that she did for me. I know it's made a difference in my life, I know it has," she says. "I'm still doing really well and I still have my grandson and we're managing really well."

CHILDHOOD ABUSE WARNING SIGNS

The serious effects of childhood sexual abuse can persist well into adulthood. Abuse includes sexual contact as well as sharing or taking inappropriate photographs/videos or an adult exposing themselves. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, child sexual abuse victims are at risk for developing:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder as adults
- Major depressive episodes as adults
- Drug abuse and addiction

! WARNING SIGNS

While it can be difficult to recognize, it's important to look for sudden behavior changes, in addition to signs of:

- **Sexually transmitted infections**
- **Trauma to the genital area** such as bleeding or bruising
- **Excessive talk or knowledge** about sexual topics and behavior
- **Regressive behaviors** such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking
- **Not wanting to be left alone with certain people** or fear of being separated from primary caregivers
- **Changes in eating habits**, self-confidence or personality
- **Increase in health problems** such as stomach aches and headaches
- **Nightmares**
- **Self-harming behaviors**

! GENERAL DYNAMICS

- **Sense of isolation**
- **Guilt-ridden/Self-blame**
- **Depression**
- **Deep-seated anger/hostility**
- **Suicidal ideation**
- **Dependency and/or control in relationships**
- **Compulsive behaviors**
- **Emotional numbing**
- **Learned helplessness**



EMPOWERING SURVIVORS

Why 'having people in your corner is a beautiful thing'

BY ANNE STOKES

As a single mom, Susan* was cautious about dating. She tried meeting new people online, an approach she thought would give her better control over who she'd allow into her family's life. She connected with a man who told her he was a police officer, which made her feel even safer. Unfortunately, that sense of safety was short-lived. The first time they met for lunch, she was sexually assaulted.

At a friend's suggestion, she reached out to Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California.

I honestly don't know if I could have gotten through the last few years without their support.

Susan
Survivor

"They let me explain what happened to me, to take as much time as I needed," she says. "They're there to let you know that these are your options. You have control to make whatever decision you want ... [and they] help you weigh out the pros and cons to determine what's best for you because every situation is different."

Even for someone not experiencing the

extreme trauma of sexual assault, navigating legal and health care systems is daunting. For a survivor of a violent crime, it can seem impossible. Susan says RCI helped her understand her immediate and long-term options: Should she get a sexual assault forensic exam? Did she want the exam but choose not to report to law enforcement? If she wanted to report, what could that process look like? In the months that followed, RCI supported Susan through counseling services, as well as interacting with local law enforcement on her behalf as her advocate.

"I was dealing with the emotions of the assault, the hospital and the police department and it was definitely a very trying time. Rape Crisis was there to let me know that I didn't do anything wrong, that this isn't my fault," she says. "That was pivotal because I felt very much at fault."

That was three years ago. She says throughout her ordeal, RCI was there to support and guide her through her healing process and she is still working with her counselor on a regular basis today. She says while reaching out for help was one of the hardest things she's ever had to do, it has helped her endure some of the darkest periods of her life.

"They have helped me become a much stronger individual and I honestly don't know if I could have gotten through the last few years without their support," she says. "Asking for help is not a bad thing, having people in your corner is a beautiful thing. If you're struggling or if you have questions about something you think might have happened to you, it's a simple phone call and it could be life-changing."

*not her real name

If you need help, reach out to Rape Crisis Intervention's 24/7 crisis line at 530-342-RAPE (7273) or online at www.rapecrisis.org.

SEXUAL ASSAULT STATISTICS

Sexual assault can be defined as sexual contact or behavior without explicit consent and can take the form of fondling, forcing someone to perform sexual acts, rape or attempted rape. It is unfortunately a far too common occurrence.

73
seconds

The Department of Justice estimates that **a sexual assault occurs every 73 seconds** in the United States.

1 in 4
girls

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists **1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience child sexual abuse during childhood**. 91% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or the child's family knows.

55%

A majority of sexual assaults—**55%—happen at or near a victim's home.**

63,000
child sexual abuse victims

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has found substantiated evidence that an **estimated 63,000 children a year are victims of sexual abuse**: 34% are younger than 12 and 66% are between the ages of 12 and 17.



A PATH FORWARD

A young male survivor found new stability in his life and now helps others find theirs

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

OTHER RESOURCES FOR MALE SURVIVORS

Men who are survivors of child sexual abuse are less likely to discuss their traumas and seek help than women, says Hope Aguirre, Executive Director of Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California.

One valuable online resource is 1in6, based on the statistics that one man in six has experienced sexual abuse and “dedicated to helping men who have survived unwanted or abusive sexual experiences.” It’s a partner of the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

1in6 points out that, as adults, **survivors are susceptible to a disquieting range of dysfunction** that includes substance abuse, low self-esteem, guilt and shame, suicidal thoughts, isolation, concerns over sexual orientation, and the inability to establish and maintain intimate relationships.

To foster understanding and healing, 1in6 offers a menu of online services: a 24/7 helpline that connects to trained advocates; chat-based support groups; a virtual library of data, such as common myths vs. the facts; answers to frequently asked questions; male survivor stories in narrative and video form; and referrals to related organizations.

1IN6: WWW.1IN6.ORG

**RAPE, ABUSE &
INCEST NATIONAL NETWORK:
WWW.RAINN.ORG**

In the beginning of California’s 1970 Rape Crisis Movement, women-only centers were not uncommon. That is where Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California didn’t agree. The center has always believed rape isn’t a gender issue, it’s a human issue.

Jack Smith, 29, was sentenced to a life of tumult when his father molested him at age 4. What helped him survive and eventually thrive can be credited to his experiences at the RCI center.

Smith’s episode was one of the 10 categories of “toxic stress” factors that are now clinically classified as ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences. They include sexual and physical abuse, emotional neglect and household dysfunction. They’re shown to lead to lifelong issues, including addiction, social alienation, and mental and physical illnesses.

When everything seems to be falling apart, remind yourself that there is so much more out there.

Jack Smith
Survivor and counselor

“When it happened, I didn’t know it was wrong, but I knew something wasn’t right,” he recalls. “The (molestation) was a one-time (experience) and I guess I blocked it out, but growing up there was a lot of physical and psychological trauma (also classified as ACEs). My father and I always went toe-to-toe.”

The cumulative consequences for him have been severe and shocking.

“My life hasn’t been great,” Smith says. “I’ve been in therapy since I was 10. I’ve been (voluntarily and involuntarily) admitted to psychiatric hospitals, and had a

bunch of suicide attempts. At one point, they thought I was going to shoot up a school. And I was recently diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (for which I am in therapy).”

Three years ago, Smith applied to Rape Crisis Intervention for an internship. “There was something about it that I was drawn to,” he says.

During early training as a certified volunteer counselor, “all the memories suddenly came back in waves as I was driving on the freeway,” he says. “It was really intense. If you’re going to have a crisis, driving at 70 miles an hour is probably not the time to do it.”

Memories continued to overwhelm him at the center. “I threw out everything to my fellow trainees (many were survivors themselves). They were supportive and focused on the training we were learning—letting survivors talk at their own pace. I was like fodder for our training,” he says.

After two years at the center, Smith took his skills to Utah, where he counsels sex-offending youths in a secure facility. “Things are so much better for me now,” he says. “Everybody in my life tells me they’ve never seen me do so well.”

What counsel would Smith offer other survivors?

“When everything seems to be falling apart, remind yourself that there is so much more out there.”

If you need help, reach out to Rape Crisis Intervention’s 24/7 crisis line at 530-342-RAPE (7273), collect calls accepted, or at www.rapecrisis.org. And when you call through RAINN 800-656-HOPE (4673), you’ll be routed to a local sexual assault service provider in your area, like us! Cell phone callers have the option to enter the ZIP code of their current location to more accurately identify the nearest provider.



A FOREVER JOB

A long-time RCI staffer still finds she is needed in an organization with values she shares

EXCEPTIONAL STAFF TRAINING

The nonprofit Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California's counseling service calls the volunteers/interns "the heartbeat of their agency."

Most of the volunteers are college students who make a nine-month commitment, working 36 hours a month on our 24/7 crisis hotline, advocating for clients. They can also work additional hours helping with community education and outreach.

At the core of the RCI volunteer program is a multi-day, 64-hour training regimen. **Graduates are state-certified as Sexual Assault counselors** as long as they continue to work with the RCI agency.

Part of their training involves interaction with law enforcement, criminologists, the district attorney's office, mental health professionals, domestic violence services and representatives from Stonewall Alliance, Chico.

"When they go through our training and work with us, (many of them) are moved to realize, 'This is what I want to do' and they change their career paths," says RCI Outreach/Counselor Michelle Bouma. "They carry with them what they learned with us."

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

When it comes to working for an employer, Michelle Bouma has always interviewed them as much as they interviewed her.

"But I never stayed more than a year at any one place because I'd grow disillusioned or bored," she says.

That changed 20 years ago. Bouma applied, interviewed and accepted the position of Outreach/Counselor at Rape Crisis Intervention of North Central California.

As confidentiality is paramount to the work done at RCI, her first task was to complete an intense training to become a State-Certified Trained Sexual Assault Counselor per California Evidence Code 1035.2. This state requirement is vital to RCI's Board of Directors, staff and volunteers/interns, because it gives them the ability to offer privileged communication to every client.

Now, at age 57 and as a veteran RCI Outreach/Counselor, she handles myriad duties as a confidante, client advocate, mentor and day-to-day agency organizer. For instance, when clients come in for the first time after their initial crisis call, Bouma meets with them for RCI's follow-up and continuity of client services. She is also available to accompany and/or advocate for clients at hospitals, law enforcement and court proceedings, and refers clients to other community agencies and resources.

"I have always chosen my life to support what I believe in," she says. "This job has supported that even more."

The RCI's "help model" differs from what survivors find in traditional therapy settings, Bouma points out. "When people come in, we don't tell them what's wrong and how to fix it. We walk alongside them and show them different ways of looking at things. We're trying to get to those

ah-ha! moments that create ties between us."

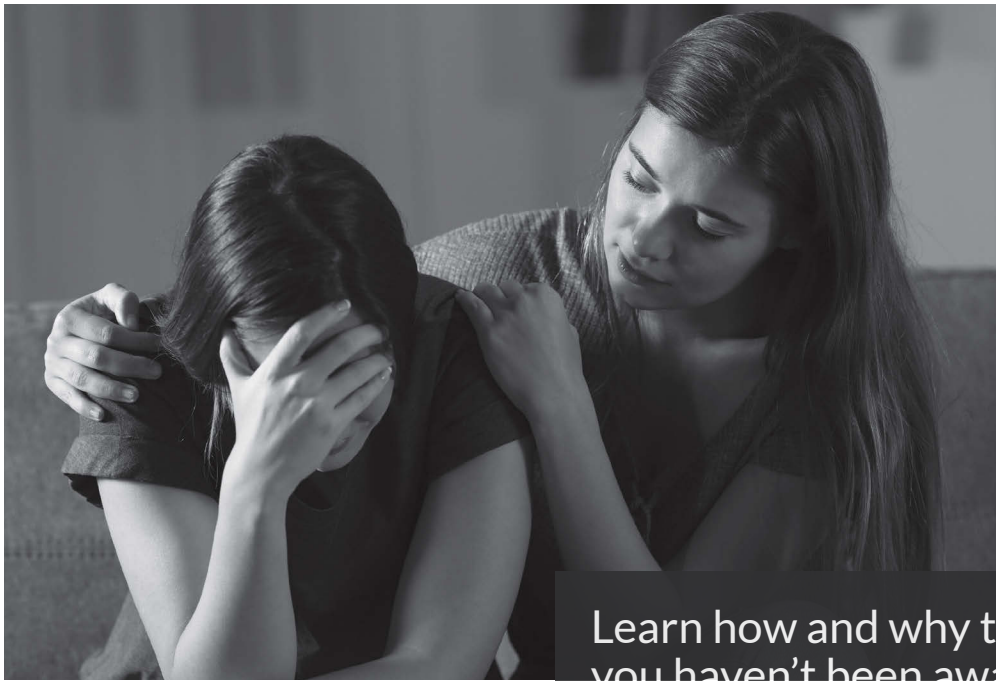
The most satisfying part of her work, she says, is "watching our clients become empowered, learn to value

When people come in, we don't tell them what's wrong and how to fix it. We walk alongside them and show them different ways of looking at things.

Michelle Bouma
Outreach Counselor

themselves, and watch their lives become something they didn't think they could ever have. That beautiful outcome is the part that I see. I don't focus on the horrific things that happened to them."

RCI "has the same values as I do, or I couldn't work here," Bouma says. "In that sense I feel like I'm really making a difference and changing lives, not only for survivors but for students, families, significant others, people in the community, and other agencies. Twenty years in, and I feel like I'm still needed."



Q&A WITH HOPE AGUIRRE

Learn how and why this organization does what it does—and why you haven't been aware of their work until now

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

Rape Crisis Intervention is the only agency of its kind serving Butte, Glenn and Tehama counties, staffed by state-certified, trained sexual assault counselors who are committed to client confidentiality.

Its mission is to “develop and implement services for all survivors of sexual violence and their significant others.”

RCI's services include 24/7 hotlines, one-on-one counseling, follow-up and continuity services, support groups, accompaniment services to case-related venues (hospitals, court proceedings), referrals, community outreach, workshops and more.

We caught up with RCI Executive Director Hope Aguirre to get an insider's view of the agency, how it helps survivors and strives to educate the public. Aguirre began as an RCI volunteer 36 years ago and has led the organization since 1997.

WHAT DOES RCI DO?

Although we are there for anyone who has been raped and/or sexually violated, 95% of our clients are adults who were sexually violated as children or have experienced other forms of trauma. As learned from the 1995-97 Adverse Childhood Experience Study, childhood trauma has a tremendous impact on future violence, victimization and perpetration, and lifelong health and opportunity.

WHAT IS ACES?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur during childhood. ACEs can have a significant impact on a person's physical, emotional and mental health throughout their life. Children who have

had multiple and/or ongoing trauma often find a lot of dysfunction in many areas of their lives. We've seen survivors as young as 3 and as old as 92. Normally, by the time survivors want to work on these issues, they're in their late 30s and older, although now we see people coming in their 20s, so that's an improvement.

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

To help clients deal with their traumas without judgment. People want to believe survivors are lying due to mental health issues. But that's not true. Often our clients have mental health issues because of what happened to them and many have been told they're crazy. We help clients deal with their traumas and get back to normalcy.

YOU AND MOST OF YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SURVIVORS YOURSELVES.

Because we've been there, we understand what they're going through. Unless we are asked, we don't tell our clients we're survivors because it's not about us, it's about them.

WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE THINGS YOU DO FOR SURVIVORS?

We listen, but we also validate what they're feeling because we believe them. One of the biggest issues for adults molested as children is that their families ostracize them because they don't believe them. The community should be aware that (sexual abuse) is out there. Society has been taught to believe it is strangers who are molesting children. Unfortunately, 90-95% of the time, it is family members that are molesting their children and that's the saddest part.

DO YOU GET MORE WOMEN OR MEN AS CLIENTS?

We do, although sexual violence is devastating and traumatic for anyone, historically women in some way have been taught they can be victimized where men have not. But it's more traumatic for men to ask for help because they don't acknowledge the event and don't want anyone else to know they were victimized.

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUR PROCESS?

Our calls have gone up 85%. We now offer counseling, support groups and education virtually through Zoom.

YOUR OUTREACH PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS, BUT YOU'VE BEEN CALLED “A WELL-KEPT SECRET.”

When people see our name, they often assume we only deal with current rapes and that we are only there for that process. Because of our strict confidentiality policy, people in the community don't hear about us or understand what we do because we protect our clients and never talk about them. (In turn) our clients are reluctant to discuss what they're going through, so there is very little word-of-mouth about us. We're there for them, regardless when they were sexually assaulted.

WHAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK?

I get to see survivors grow. It's amazing to see them blossom and be positive about themselves. So we're going to continue doing what we need to do—get people through what they need to get through.

MORE INFORMATION: WWW.RAPECRISIS.ORG



RAPE CRISIS INTERVENTION OF NORTH CENTRAL CALIFORNIA **IS HERE FOR YOU**

- ! 24/7 (including holidays)
Access to Crisis Hotline
- ! Advocacy &
Accompaniment
- ! Follow-up &
Continuity Services
- ! One-on-One Counseling
- ! Information, Referrals
and Resources
- ! Client Support Groups
and Workshops
- ! Community Education,
Outreach and Prevention

HOW YOU CAN HELP RCI



Donations



Volunteer



**Educate yourself
and those you love**

**RAPE CRISIS
INTERVENTION OF
NORTH CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA**

If you've been the victim of any type of sexual violence—no matter how old you were or how long ago it occurred—RCI can help you regain a stable, healthy life. Seasoned counselors, many of whom are survivors themselves, offer free and confidential services to survivors, their families, friends, spouses and to the community at large.

24/7 CRISIS HOTLINE:
530-342-RAPE (7273)
(COLLECT CALLS ACCEPTED)

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