

APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

THE WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This year, WCASA is marking SAAM by rolling out a new awareness campaign, which is also the theme for SAAM: Rise to the Challenge.

This campaign asks for us all to get involved in ending sexual violence in our community. While sexual assault impacts individuals, its root causes are interwoven throughout our culture, and therefore to eradicate violence we must all evaluate the prevailing language, attitudes, and cultural beliefs about sex, sexuality, and gender.

Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, incest, child sexual abuse, stalking, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. These crimes are not committed in dark alleys by strangers so much as they are committed in our schools, our workplaces, our streets and our homes by people we know. The victims are not impersonal stereotypes. They are sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends, ... and possibly even you and me.

Statistics show us that any random group of three Wisconsin women holds one victim of sexual assault, as does any group of five Wisconsin men. In fact, 93% of sexual assault survivors are violated by someone they know and trust, oftentimes before the age of 15.

Talk to your children now. Talk to your friends now. Talk to your grandparents now. Make sure you address any inappropriate behaviors that you see now. The simple act of speaking up may seem frightening, but it changes the world in ways that you can't imagine. During SAAM, show your support by wearing a teal-colored ribbon. Wear your ribbon proudly to let others know that you do not accept sexual violence in your community.

The climate that we collectively create around us every day can continue to be one of rape culture - where misogyny, racism, homophobia, and sexist attitudes persist; or it can be transformed into one which supports equality, safety, communication, and embodies a world without violence. It's up to all of us to rise to the challenge every day to bring this new world into being.

WCASA's mission is to create the social change necessary to end sexual violence.

WCASA is a membership agency comprised of organizations and individuals working to end sexual violence in Wisconsin. Among these are the 43 agencies throughout the state that offer support, advocacy and information to victims of sexual assault and their families.

WCASA works to ensure that every victim in Wisconsin gets the support and care they need. WCASA also works to create the social change necessary to ensure a future where no child, woman or man is ever sexually violated again.

WCASA works to support our members by providing:

- Grants ranging from \$100 to \$20,000.
- The state's most extensive resource center covering all aspects of sexual assault.
- Technical Assistance on issues related to sexual assault, including program development, legal advocacy, policy development, public education and victim and offender dynamics.
- An education program which offers year-round opportunities for training and conferencing.

In addition, WCASA works to provide the social change necessary to end sexual violence through:

- Curriculum designed to promote anti-violence and respect in the K-12 school system.
- Statewide awareness events intended to promote public education of sexual assault.
- Parents' guides which help parents talk to their kids about sexual assault.
- Legislative initiatives designed to improve the legal system to benefit victims of sexual assault and other violent crimes.

WCASA offers information and referral on any issue related to sexual violence. We do not offer direct services to victim/survivors of sexual violence, however we can connect you to a local agency that does. Also, WCASA cannot offer legal advice and no information obtained from The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc. can be considered legal advice.

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN WISCONSIN

Sexual assaults are acts of violence where sex is used as the weapon. Assaults are motivated primarily out of a sense of entitlement and/or a need to feel powerful by controlling, dominating, or humiliating the victim. Victims/survivors of sexual assaults are forced, coerced, and/ or manipulated to participate in unwanted sexual activity.

If you examine the situations in which sexual abuse occurs, there is always a perceived or real power differential. The perpetrator feels entitled to take advantage of another person and believes that he or she can get away with the crime either because the victim will be afraid to tell, or because s/he is unlikely to be believed if s/he does tell.

Whether the crime is rape, incest, child sexual abuse, stalking or sexual harassment, sexual assault impacts our schools, our workplace, our streets and our homes. Victims are our sons, our daughters, our brothers, sisters, friends and grandparents. It is estimated that as many as 1 in 3 women have been the victim of sexual assault at some point in her life: 1 in 5 men. 93% of sexual assault survivors are violated by someone they know and trusted.

Victims/survivors do not cause their assaults and are not to blame. Offenders are responsible for the assaults.

Each misperception about sexual assault that exists in society serves to protect perpetrators, blame victims, and make all of us more vulnerable.

THE MYTH:

False allegations of sexual assault are common.

THE TRUTH:

The reality is that sexual assault is a vastly under reported crime. It is estimated that only 5- 20% of sexual assaults are reported to law enforcement. In addition, the percentage of false allegations is no higher than for other types of violent crimes.

IMPACT

Sexual assault can have a devastating impact on survivors and our communities. Depression, anxiety, panic, isolation, self-hatred, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and AIDS, alcohol and drug dependency, eating disorders and post traumatic stress disorder are just some of the possible effects on survivors of sexual assault.

THERE IS HOPE FOR HEALING. When survivors are believed and supported, individuals can find the strength and resiliency to survive and thrive.

"It has shattered my life. But putting myself back together has offered me the opportunity to look at each aspect of my life, allowing me to decide what I would like to keep, what I would like to discard, and what I would like to strengthen. It has given me the opportunity to become a stronger, healthier, person." ~~a survivor.

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ROCK COUNTY RESOURCES FOR HELP

Sexual Assault Recovery Program

423 Bluff Street

Beloit, WI 53511

Phone: (608) 365-1244

Crisis Line: (866) 666-4576

TTY: (608) 365-4097

pmeyers@sarpwi.com

www.sarpwi.com

Counties Served: Rock, Green

Sexual Assault Recovery Program - Janesville Office

115 Court Street, Ste. 270

Janesville, WI 53545

Phone: (608) 305-0187

Source: <http://www.wcasa.org/about/index.htm>