

The NSVRC encourages all agencies, programs, and coalitions to plan SAAM activities and events throughout the month of April, and if possible, throughout the year. To assist you in SAAM planning, in this section, the NSVRC provides a variety of ideas collected from advocates. Some are relatively easy to plan and may not require a lot of time or resources; others require more lead-time, planning, and resources. The scale of each event may be adjusted to fit your needs and the size of your community. We encourage collaboration when conducting and promoting events. Additionally, we recommend partnering with local media outlets to cover or promote your events.

More detailed information on how to plan these events may be found at [www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam). We also encourage you to visit the SAAM events calendar on the NSVRC website for a review of planned activities from across the nation. **As always, we suggest that you check with your state, territory, or tribal coalition to see if they are coordinating any events.**

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## Poetry Slam

Poetry Slams have become increasingly popular since they began in the 1980s. Poetry Slams are events in which poets perform their work and are judged on their writing and performance, encouraging poets to focus on what they're saying and how they're saying it. In April 2006, the NSVRC encourages programs to sponsor SAAM Poetry Slams in their communities, with an emphasis on the awareness and prevention of sexual violence. The 2006 SAAM Poetry Slam events are open to anyone who is willing to participate, but registration with a local program is required. More information is available in the "Featured Event" insert in the 2006 SAAM packet.

These events can be large or small; however, we recommend that you begin planning this event four to five months prior to the event date. You may partner with campus organizations and local colleges to locate a venue for the event. University English and Performing Arts Departments may be interested in co-sponsoring the event. Ask local businesses to sponsor your event. Additionally, invite your local media to advertise and cover the event. Finally, you may wish to partner with your local radio stations for DJs, judges, and hosts.

## Walk a Mile in Her Shoes

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes events have become very popular and have grown each year since 2001, when Frank Baird first proposed *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: Men's March to Stop Rape, Sexual Assault and Gender Violence* to the Valley Trauma Center in California. These marches are designed to benefit rape crisis centers, but also provide a

fun opportunity for men to educate the community about sexual violence. These events also rally the community to discuss the connection between gender relations and sexual violence, and to take action to prevent sexual violence. During the marches, men walk one mile in women's high-heeled shoes to help men gain a better understanding and appreciation of women's experiences. They also promote healing, as they demonstrate that men are willing and able to be courageous partners with women in making the world a safer place.

While these events can be large or small, we encourage you to begin planning at least three months prior to the event date. You may partner with male groups on college campuses, especially fraternities, or male leaders in your community. Consider partnering with local businesses to provide women's shoes. You may also invite your local media to cover the event. Finally, be sure to check with your local law enforcement official regarding legal status of your event and safety issues.

## Tree/Flower Planting Ceremony

Tree and flower planting ceremonies during Sexual Assault Awareness Month serve a dual purpose. They give recognition to those who have been sexually assaulted in our communities and counter pollution in our environment. These events provide the community an opportunity to honor a relative, friend, or other victim and/or survivor with the new life of a tree or plant. These ceremonies may be held in conjunction with Arbor Week, Earth Day or Arbor Day, and provide excellent opportunities for you to partner with local home improvement businesses and

greenhouses. You may consider asking these companies to donate trees or flowers to plant during your event.

We encourage you to begin planning at least three months prior to the event date. These events may take place in local parks, on college campuses, or in communities. You may need to contact local officials or campus administrators to find out what their procedure is for approving such events in your area. Finally, inviting public officials and knowledgeable speakers may bring more media attention to your event.

## **Clothesline Project**

Sponsoring a Clothesline Project event can be a very effective means of raising awareness about sexual violence. The Clothesline Project is a program started on Cape Cod, MA, in 1990 to address the issue of violence against women. It began as a vehicle for women affected by violence to express their emotions by decorating a shirt. They then hang the shirt on a clothesline to be viewed by others as testimony to the problem of violence against women. Today, Clothesline Projects provide awareness about sexual and domestic violence, hate crimes, and child abuse. Many communities have developed culturally-specific Clothesline Projects (i.e., Asian Clothesline Project in MA). Most events include a shirt making session, held in conjunction with a display of recently or previously created shirts. Alternatively, you might arrange simply to display previously created T-shirts. The shirts may be color coded to show the form of abuse and whether the victim survived the abuse they experienced.

While these events can be large or small, we encourage organizers to begin planning at least six months prior to the event date. You may also consider asking local businesses to provide the shirts and other supplies for this event.

## **Partner with a Local Restaurant**

There is a range of ways you can incorporate a local restaurant into your SAAM activities. Find a local restaurant that will provide an organizational discount and then host a corporate/legislative breakfast to (re)introduce your agency and board to the community. Another possibility is to ask for a small percent of the profits on “A Day to End Sexual Violence” as a charitable donation. Or, ask if you may put brochures or teal awareness ribbon pins near the cash register. You may want to produce a napkin or placemat with awareness information and ask the restaurant to use them on “A Day to End Sexual Violence.” Finally, it is always good to ask if you

may hang awareness posters in a public area of the restaurant.

## **Open House**

Having an open house reception can be a simple but very effective way to raise awareness of sexual assault and of your agency/program’s role in the community. An open house provides an opportunity for you to raise your profile in the community and to provide valuable information. You can place brochures, signs and educational information on a table as well as provide information about volunteer opportunities.

The open house can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. Your staff may decide to provide snacks and refreshments. Or if your budget permits, you may choose to have a catered reception. Invite your board members and local public officials and of course, find some way to get the word out to the public. See the section below about radio and television for ideas. You may also want to invite school administrators, and guidance counselors, as well as local businesses and chamber of commerce. If possible, send out invitations in addition to a general public announcement on the radio and community bulletin. Finally, you may want to include some high profile officials and speakers. Just remember, even a small open house will provide a large opportunity of raising awareness.

## **Radio and Television Ads**

Raise awareness of your organization by posting event announcements on your local public access television station. Also consider contacting your local radio station—including college radio stations—to ask for free or reduced cost creation and/or airing of public service announcements. Another option is to secure time on a public affairs show to discuss the issues and your organization’s services. Reaching community members through radio and television stations does not need to be expensive to create awareness and provide publicity.

## **Using Public Fountains**

There may be a number of public fountains in your community, especially if you live in a larger city. You may consider contacting your local officials to ask if the water in the fountains can be colored teal during the month of April. This will raise many questions throughout your community. The fountains provide a unique opportunity for individuals to reflect on how they can prevent sexual violence in their community.

We encourage organizers to begin planning at least four months prior to the event date. You may wish to invite public officials to a ceremony, where they may present the fountains, proclamations, and/or awards. You may also consider having your local media and government's website post an article on the fountains and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

## Library Events

Partnering with your local library can provide you with several low-cost, yet high-value, opportunities. Set up a display with relevant books, brochures and other materials. Focus both on the issue and your organization's services. Or, consider hosting an author or poet's reading of her/his sexual violence-related work(s). Offer prevention education programming to children by reading books on and discussing good and bad touches and self-esteem. You may develop bookmarks for distribution in the library. All of these options will educate your community members and increase awareness of your organization.

## Mock Trial

Mock Sexual Assault Trials are used across the country to educate communities about the legal process and address myths and facts about sexual assault. Mock Trials are condensed re-creations of actual or imaginary trials. This dramatic style of presentation enables an organization to pull in judicial representatives, theater groups, students, and a wide variety of community members. Mock trials have been used to train first responders about their role in the criminal justice process and inform survivors of what might be involved in pursuing criminal charges. Some communities have adapted the mock trial to explore the campus judicial hearing process.

Developing a mock trial takes time; we suggest allowing at least three months for planning. Mock trials rely on a script, actors/community members and good marketing. If you do not have the time to develop your own script, videos and scripts are available from the NSVRC for adaptation. Local service providers such as police, judges, attorneys and forensic examiners make for great actors. You may be able to hold the mock trial in your area courthouse, town hall or educational institution. Mock juries often struggle with the same issues as actual jury members. Some organizations have included a video, script or scene to depict the events leading up the sexual assault as a way to close to presentation no matter what decision the jury reaches.

## Take Back the Night

Take Back the Night (TBTN) is an international phenomenon that began in the early 1970's in Germany in response to a series of sexual assaults and murders. TBTN rallies and marches have been held throughout the United States since the late 1970's. Local communities in the United States, Canada, Latin America, India and Europe have been organizing TBTN marches and rallies to unify individuals to stand against violence in their communities. It serves as an empowering educational process.

As activism has grown over the years, this public event has been adapted to meet individual community needs. Consider your unique community priorities when encouraging participants and planning this event. While these events can be large or small, we encourage organizers to begin planning several months prior to the event date. TBTN can include a candlelight vigil, a rally, a survivor Speakout, and a large-scale public march. Many organizations have incorporated the arts into their event with banner making contests, musical performances, poetry and exhibits like the Clothesline Project that presents t-shirts that display the feelings and stories of survivors. Be sure to check with your local law enforcement official regarding legal status of your event and safety issues.

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*The NSVRC offers customized technical assistance regarding SAAM. Contact Eboni Braxton, Sexual Assault Prevention Coordinator, at (877) 739-3895, ext. 119, or visit [www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam).*