



April 1, 2005

Dear Colleague:

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in the United States. It is a time to engage communities around the issue of sexual violence and raise awareness about its devastating effects.

Rape—one of the most underreported crimes—is difficult to document because about 84% of rapes are not reported.¹ However, the National Violence Against Women Survey estimated that over 302,000 women and almost 93,000 men were raped over a 12-month period; this same survey found that 8 out of every 10 victims knew their perpetrator.²

The impact of sexual violence on an individual is life-changing. Physical injuries with both short- and long-term consequences can result. Also, victims of sexual violence often face serious mental health problems, including depression. Many victims do not tell friends or family about the assault. Instead, they suffer the psychological consequences alone. Victims who do disclose their abuse may be stigmatized by their family, friends, and communities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working to prevent sexual violence *before* it occurs. Our approach includes defining the extent of the problem; identifying risk and protective factors; developing and testing prevention strategies; and assuring widespread adoption of effective programs. For information on sexual violence or on CDC's research and program activities, visit www.cdc.gov/injury.

In recognition of SAAM, CDC will be involved in several activities during April:

- Providing talking points on healthy relationships and issuing a new fact sheet on *The Truth About Rape* (attached).
- Cosponsoring a **Web seminar on sexual violence** and the Adverse Childhood Experiences study. The speaker will be Dr. Vincent Felitti, founder of the Department of Preventative Medicine at Kaiser Permanente in Southern California. The Web seminar will air April 29, 2005, from 2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. Eastern. To register, send an e-mail to webseminar@cdc.gov.

The opportunity SAAM provides to develop new partnerships and engage local communities around sexual violence is critical to our success. Please join CDC in working to prevent sexual violence.

SAAM materials (including ribbons, pins, sample press releases, and examples of community activities) can be obtained from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at (877) 739-3895 or www.nsvrc.org

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Rodney Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "W".

W. Rodney Hammond, PhD.
Director, Division of Violence Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

References:

1. Kilpatrick DG, Edmunds CN, Seymour AK. Rape in America: a report to the nation. Arlington (VA): National Victim Center and Medical University of South Carolina; 1992.
2. Tjaden P, Thoennes N. Full report of the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of violence against women: findings from the national violence against women survey. Washington (DC): National Institute of Justice; 2000. Report NCJ 183.