

It's time ... to plan events for Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The following list of event suggestions will help you with planning an effective Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign. We encourage you to adapt events and activities to meet your community's needs. When scheduling your SAAM event(s), be sure to add them to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center's event calendar at www.nsvrc.org. This allows other organizations to attend local events, generate ideas and capture the scope of the activities going on throughout the country.

2011 "Day of Action"

For the 2011 "SAAM Day of Action," the NSVRC is suggesting individuals capture the spirit of this campaign by taking a picture of themselves holding a clock and proclaiming that "It's time ... to get involved" in their communities. Also, we urge the online community to get involved in spreading awareness through social media sites. We're urging Facebook users to change their profile pictures on April 5, 2011, to show them holding clocks as well.

If you have a photograph from a SAAM Day of Action event or activity that you are willing to share, please send a copy to NSVRC via email to resources@nsvrc.org or by mail. Events from across the country may be spotlighted in the NSVRC events calendar, future SAAM materials, newsletters or on our website or Facebook and Twitter pages.

Get creative with your campaign photo. Highlights friends and faces or take an artistic approach that focuses on clocks and

different images of time. Then grab your digital camera or cell phone to get a great shot and share it. Proclaim "It's time ..."

These pictures could work well for community programs, art galleries, campus "Day of Action" events, or school assignments. People could also supply a couple lines of text explaining what it's time for them to do, i.e. "It's time ... to support a friend or "It's time ... to stop making sexist jokes."

Set up an awareness booth/table

Set up an information booth or table at a busy location in your community. Hang teal decorations and distribute SAAM products (these may be ordered from the NSVRC store) and information on sexual assault. Distribute tip sheets (some of which are included on this CD) engaging individuals to prevent sexual violence in their everyday lives. Distribute candy to attract visitors to your table. Make sure you obtain approval from your college or community authorities to set up and staff the table for a few hours.

Launch a Bandana Project

This event, created by the Southern Poverty Law Center, raises awareness about violence against farm worker women. From the website, the goal is “to honor those who have taken action to hold the perpetrators and their employers responsible for this violence. These bandanas are also a show of support to victims whose shame and fear prevents them from taking action. May they be fortified and empowered so that they will no longer have to suffer in silence.” Get a group of community members together to decorate white bandanas in creative ways. Hang the bandanas in a public space to generate dialogue about this issue and how people can be involved in preventing sexual violence.

Showcase an art exhibit

Have survivors do art or photography displays to express their healing as part of a support or therapy group. Some centers have produced shadow boxes, quilts, hand-made dresses, collages, and jewelry. Display the art in a public space and have local musicians and other artists perform.

Partner with local bars/nightclubs

Have a custom hand stamp created with a catchy slogan, like “consent is sexy” and your organization’s web address. Collaborate with local bars to use the stamp for entrance during the month of April in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This is a great way to get the word out about your organization and promote a pro-consent message to people out having fun.

Host a “Breakfast With” event

Invite local legislators, who have sponsored legislation that addresses sexual violence to talk about contemporary trends in anti-sexual violence law. You can also invite local business leaders, law enforcement agencies, attorneys, and other groups that would be impacted by pending or recently passed legislation. Make sure that your organization’s services are highlighted during the presentation. If possible, have presenters wear stickers, pins, or T-shirts advertising your organization.

Coordinate a Clothesline Project

The Clothesline Project began as a vehicle for women affected by violence to express their emotions by decorating a T-shirt. The shirt is then hung 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 (e.g. Asian Clothesline Project in Massachusetts). Most events include a shirt-making session, held in conjunction with a display of recently or previously created shirts. The shirts may be teal or color-coded, colors can signify the form of abuse and whether the victim survived the abuse they experienced. While these events can be large or small, organizers should begin planning at least six months prior to the event date. You may also consider asking local businesses to donate the shirts and other supplies for this event. For more, visit www.clotheslineproject.org.

Collaborate on "a cup of prevention"

Ask local coffee shops, book stores, and small restaurants to donate a percentage of their coffee and tea sales to a local rape crisis center during the month of April.

Honor Denim Day

Denim Day is an international protest responding to the Italian Supreme Court's overruling of a rape conviction in 1999. An Italian woman was raped, and when the case went to trial, the jury found her assailant guilty. The Supreme Court then overturned the ruling, saying that jeans are too difficult to remove and the assailant could not have done so without the victim's help.

To honor Denim Day, people are encouraged to wear jeans to work or school in order to promote awareness. Your organization can also print stickers or buttons with Denim Day slogans on them, to encourage people to ask, "What is Denim Day?" To make this event successful, effective promotion is key. Publicize this event to as many businesses and schools as possible. Information about sexual assault should be sent out with the information about Denim Day. Peace Over Violence (formerly the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women), sponsors a Denim Day in LA campaign with related resources. For more, visit www.denimdayinla.org.

Sponsor an essay contest

Invite community members to write essays about the impact of sexual violence on their lives and their role in prevention. Collect and publish the essays. Distribute these stories around your community, to donors, and to partner organizations.

Organize a bookstore/library display or reading

Approach local bookstores and libraries about setting up displays of books related to sexual assault with a Sexual Assault Awareness Month flyer and your program's information. Organize a book or poetry reading about sexual assault and healing.

Partner with corporations

Encourage major corporations in your community to add a note into employee's paychecks with your agency's information and information on sexual assault. This can also be done with utility and cable companies by requesting the information be placed in customers' bills.

Suggest a faith-based community challenge

Challenge area faith communities to address sexual violence during April in services, prayer sessions and through articles, and donations to local rape crisis centers. Remember to ask for permission to have sexual assault information on display throughout the month.

Initiate a flag campaign

Purchase small teal flags and insert them into grassy areas throughout the community. For example, calculate the annual number of sexual assaults for the specific college or university and place this number of flags in the ground. Set up a table nearby to explain the purpose of the flag display and distribute information about sexual assault. For some tips on using flags for your campaign, visit the Red Flag Campaign website at www.theredflagcampaign.org.

Launch a letter-writing campaign

Some organizations take part in political advocacy during Sexual Assault Awareness Month by writing letters to local, state, territory, tribal and national government officials about policies related to sexual violence that affect your community.

Participate in a 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 productions of actual or possible trials. This dramatic style of presentation enables an organization to reach out to judicial representatives, theater groups, students, and a wide variety of community members. Mock trials have been used to train first responders in the criminal justice process and inform survivors of what might be involved in pursuing criminal charges. Some communities have adapted mock trial performances to explore the campus judicial hearing process.

Developing a mock trial takes time; allow at least three months for planning. Mock trials rely on a script, actors/community members, and good marketing. 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 a local courthouse, town hall or educational institution. Mock juries often struggle with the same issues as actual jury members. After the jury reaches a verdict, some organizations choose to close the presentation with a video, script or scene that depicts the events leading up to the sexual assault.

Sponsor a movie screening

There are several films you can highlight during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Use discussion guides to get the audience talking about sexual violence and the issues addressed in the movie. Inquire at local theatres about having specific movies shown during April, with a portion of proceeds donated to local sexual violence centers as another way of raising awareness.

Host an open house

An open house reception can be a simple but effective way to raise awareness of sexual assault and of your agency/program. An open house provides an opportunity for your organization to raise its profile in the community and to provide valuable information. Make brochures, signs and educational information available and provide information about volunteer opportunities.

The open house can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. Your staff may provide snacks and refreshments. Or, if your budget permits, you may have a catered reception. Invite board members and local public officials. Publicize the open house in local newspapers or on radio stations. You may also want to invite school administrators, and guidance counselors, as well as local businesses and the chamber of commerce.

Team up with law enforcement

Request permission to tie teal ribbons to the antennae of police cars. This is an opportunity to get to know your local law enforcement officers and it allows for them to become more involved with your agency. This could also be a great opportunity for the local media to cover the campaign.

Become a human ribbon

Place a lengthy teal ribbon around a person to form an awareness ribbon. Have them stand so that the ends of the ribbon flow out and touch the ground. The human ribbon does not speak, but an advocate would accompany that person to engage on-lookers. Local dignitaries could be recruited to be the "human ribbon." Have educational information available and distribute it to observers.

Partner with a local restaurant

There is a wide range of ways you can incorporate local restaurants into your Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities. Find a local restaurant that will provide an organizational discount, and host a corporate/legislative breakfast to (re)introduce your agency and board to the community. Or, request that the eatery contribute a small percentage of the profits on the "SAAM Day of Action." Inquire if you may put brochures or teal awareness ribbon pins near the cash register. Ask restaurants to use SAAM napkins, available through the NSVRC SAAM store, during April, or suggest that employees wear a teal shirt on the "SAAM Day of Action." Promote your campaign by hanging an awareness poster in a public area of the restaurant, but be sure to request permission first.

Organize a poetry slam

Poetry slams have become increasingly popular since they began in the 1980s. Poetry slams are events where poets perform and are judged on their writing and performance. SAAM Poetry slams are open to anyone who is willing to participate, but

registration with a local program is required. These events can be large or small. We recommend that you begin planning this event four to five months prior to the event date. You may partner with organizations or schools to locate a venue for the event. English and Performing Arts Departments at local universities may be interested in co-sponsoring the event. Also consider asking 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.

Offer a poster contest

Hold a contest for students to create your organization's Sexual Assault Awareness Month posters. Use social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter to promote the contest and announce the winner. Offer a prize for the winner to attract more submissions.

Give a presentation at a salon

A unique place to hold presentations about sexual violence is at local beauty salons. You can hang a poster with sexual assault information and your organization's services, or you can provide your organization's contact information to be added to stylists' business cards, among other things.

Create a restroom campaign

Restrooms are everywhere! Put flyers up on the back of stall doors in the restrooms of college campuses, bars, businesses, state agencies (welfare, unemployment, etc.), and anywhere there is a bathroom. Remember to ask permission before posting flyers.

Get moving with a run/walk event

Many social and health causes have started annual walk or run events to raise money and awareness about their issue. If your organization has the resources to plan a walk for sexual violence awareness and prevention, this is a great option. If you have limited time and resources, consider reaching out to other organizations in your area that are holding walks and runs during April, and form a team to represent the anti-sexual violence movement. Have matching teal T-shirts made and make sure to bring materials on sexual violence to distribute to other participants.

Shine some "Light" on sexual violence

The concept of Shine the Light on Sexual Violence was originally developed by the YWCA of Greater Los Angeles Sexual Assault Crisis Program. Shine the Light can be as simple as encouraging the community to use car headlights, candles, lamps, or flashlights to develop awareness about sexual violence. You may also choose to coordinate a community event such as a candlelight vigil at dusk, for which you designate a time and place for the community to gather. Remember to disseminate flyers with the event information, including location and time, before the date in order to increase community participation.

Shop to end sexual violence

Partner with local businesses to offer discount coupons for purchases made during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Proceeds can benefit community or campus rape prevention programs.

Showcase a "Sole Survivor" event

Set up a display of shoes to represent the number of victims of sexual assault on campus in one year, or individuals who are sexually assaulted before the age of 18. Display a mix of men's, and women's and children's shoes. Staff a nearby table to answer questions about your display and distribute information on sexual assault and local resources.

Welcome survivors to "Speak Out"

This type of event creates a safe space for survivors of all forms of sexual violence to "speak out" about their experience, recovery, and healing. Choose a fairly quiet location for your event and ensure that local rape crisis center professionals are on hand to provide assistance to speakers and/or audience members in need. One option is to have two podiums and microphones set up, one for survivors that are willing to have their stories recorded by local or campus media, and one for those who do not want press coverage.

Coordinate a "Rock Against Rape" event

This benefit concert invites local musicians to play during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Proceeds can benefit community or campus rape prevention programs. You may want to have multiple performers come to one venue, or arrange with multiple local bars and restaurants to host a variety of live musicians over a couple of evenings.

Plan a "Take Back the Night" march

Take Back the Night (TBTN) is an international phenomenon that began in the early 1970's in Germany, responding 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 against violence in their communities.

TBTN can include a candlelight vigil, a rally, a survivor speak out, and a large-scale public march. Many organizations have incorporated the arts into events with banner-making contests, musical performances, poetry, and exhibits. Be sure to check with your local law enforcement officials regarding the legal status of your event and safety issues. Visit www.takebackthenight.org for more information and resources.

Support V-Day

V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. V-Day promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money, and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM), and sexual slavery. Through V-Day campaigns, local volunteers and college students produce annual benefit performances of "The Vagina Monologues" to raise awareness and funds for anti-violence groups within their own communities.

The V-Day website (www.vday.org) provides information on holding a Vagina Monologues event in your community. V-Day events often occur during the month of April but also take place throughout the calendar year.

Plant trees and flowers

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 these ceremonies counteract pollution in the environment. These events provide communities 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, all take place during April. A planting ceremony also provides an excellent opportunity for partnering with local home and garden businesses and greenhouses. Consider asking these companies to donate trees or flowers to plant during your event.

We encourage you to begin planning at least two months prior to the event date. These events may take place in local parks, on college campuses, or in the community. 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.

Promote a "Teal Ribbon Campaign"

Tie a teal ribbon to your car, your clothing, etc. Set up baskets with teal ribbons on pin cards at hair salons, libraries, banks, and doctors' offices. Wrap big teal ribbons around trees or tie teal ribbons to your county's public safety vehicles. Ask a local craft store to donate teal ribbons to your agency or provide you with a nonprofit discount. Wherever you place the ribbons, be sure to have information on the significance of the ribbon as part of sexual assault awareness and prevention efforts.

Collaborate on a White Ribbon Campaign

This is a great project to do in conjunction with your local law enforcement agencies and colleges, and it makes for a great press event. The goals of the campaign are to involve men in working to end men's violence against women, to raise awareness in the community, and to support organizations that deal with the consequences of men's violence against women. Men who choose to participate wear a white ribbon and sign a pledge card stating that they will never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women. For more information, visit www.whiteribbon.ca.

"Walk a Mile in Her Shoes"

During "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" marches, men walk one mile in women's high-heeled shoes to help men gain a better understanding and appreciation of women's experiences. These marches are designed to benefit rape crisis centers, and provide a fun opportunity for men to participate in educating communities about sexual violence. These events also unite the community to discuss connections between gender relations and sexual violence, and to take action to prevent sexual violence. For information, visit www.walkamileinher shoes.org.

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 men's groups on college campuses, especially fraternities, or male leaders in your community. For more information, see the tips about partnering with men's organizations that are provided in the campaign materials. 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 officials regarding the legal status of your event and safety issues.

Event descriptions courtesy of: National Sexual Violence Resource Center, California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA), Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs (KASAP) and North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA).