



**SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH**

**MEDIA OUTREACH PACKET**

**#SAAM**

# ***SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH***

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The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is pleased to offer state coalitions, community rape crisis centers and other interested parties assistance in promoting the 2017 Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign. This year's theme, "Engaging New Voices," provides an exciting opportunity to broaden our reach and engage the greater community in prevention efforts.

We recognize the critical work that advocates, educators, and state coalitions do every day in providing victim services, managing important on-the-ground advocacy efforts, and cultivating and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders and media. The NSVRC also supports and encourages the diverse ways that the field commemorates SAAM. Therefore, this media toolkit is intended to serve as a template and guide from which you can utilize and tailor to bolster your individual unique efforts. Our hope is that these tools will help you drive media interest during SAAM to raise awareness and promote prevention.

The NSVRC is always available to provide additional support as needed, including coordinating communications outreach. We look forward to hearing about your efforts throughout the month.

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## TARGET AUDIENCES

As noted in the overview, this year's theme, "Engaging New Voices," provides an exciting opportunity to broaden our reach and engage the greater community in prevention efforts. While we can't reach everyone, we can identify key leaders whose influence is necessary in achieving cultural change in April and beyond. As you think about engaging the media in your SAAM efforts, consider outlets that reach the following audiences, in addition to media covering sexual violence regularly:

- Members of Greek Life
- Coaches
- Parents
- Faith Leaders

## KEY MESSAGES/TALKING POINTS

To foster a shared understanding of sexual violence and prevention, it is important that advocates, educators, and state coalitions use consistent communications around SAAM. The following suggested talking points are intended to aid your organization in driving these conversations. When fleshing out your message, keep in mind that it is important to customize different talking points to each of your target audiences while keeping a consistent core message throughout.

### About SAAM 2017

- In the United States, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it.
- This year, SAAM is celebrating its 16th anniversary with the theme "Engaging New

Voices" to encourage and inform a wider audience - including Greek Life, Coaches, Parents, and Faith Leaders - on how they can take action to promote safety, respect, and equality to stop sexual violence before it happens.

- We're strongest when we raise our voices together, and that's why we're engaging new groups in the movement. These groups can help the next generation foster attitudes that promote healthy relationships, equality, and respect.
- We all have a role to play in the prevention of sexual assault. New voices in the movement will have a ripple effect on those they teach, guide, and influence.
- We know that one month isn't enough to solve the serious and widespread issue of sexual violence. However, the attention April generates is an opportunity to energize and expand prevention efforts throughout the year.

### About Sexual Violence + Prevention

- Sexual assault is a serious and widespread problem.
  - Nearly 1 in 5 women in the United States have experienced rape or attempted rape some time in their lives, and 1 in 71 American men have experienced rape or attempted rape (Black et al., 2011).
  - Victims of sexual assault often experience short-term consequences including guilt, shame, fear, numbness, shock, and feelings of isolation. Victims may also experience long-term health risks and behaviors such as PTSD, eating disorders, depression, pregnancy, and STI (Cutajar et al., 2010; Santaularia et al., 2014; Wingwood et al., 2009).

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- The good news is that prevention is possible and it's happening.
    - Individuals, communities, and the private sector are already successfully combatting the risk of sexual violence through conversations, programs, policies, and research-based tools that promote safety, respect, and equality.
    - By promoting safe behaviors, thoughtful policies, and healthy relationships, we can create safe and equitable communities where every person is treated with respect.
  - We are in a watershed moment.
    - With America focused on this very important issue, we have an unprecedented opportunity to improve understanding and change behaviors. The time to rally communities and the broader public is now.
- For more information, refer to the NSVRC Fact Sheet "What is Sexual Violence" from 2016.
- State elected officials play an important role in sexual violence issues, and their continued support for policy and initiatives that address this complex issue is crucial. SAAM presents a great opportunity to engage with local elected officials and maintain an open, ongoing dialogue, particularly in discussing the important services that your organization provides to the community and how sexual violence impacts their constituents. State legislators are also very effective at getting press, and can be useful surrogates in speaking out about SAAM and sexual assault awareness and prevention more generally. You could invite local elected officials and their staff for a tour of your facility to educate the public on the important work your team does in the field, and offer to invite media to attend.
  - Reporters often respond to story ideas with a human interest angle. Consider offering the media an interview with an advocate, survivor or field worker with an interesting story to tell. Offer to share the NSVRC Media Packet to provide further background on the complexities of sexual violence.

## ***NEWS HOOKS***

Need help in generating media interest during SAAM? Outlined below are a few ideas that could pique the media's interest.

- Identify local partners that could work with your facility to support prevention efforts and the roles we all play, including faith-based organizations, sports organizations, or a local sorority or fraternity. Work corroboratively to identify appropriate events and activities to cross-promote or collaborate to create an event focused on SAAM and invite media to attend.
- Invite media for a tour of your facility to educate the public on the work your team does every day to prevent sexual violence.

## ***MEDIA OUTREACH 101***

SAAM presents an ideal opportunity to raise awareness around sexual violence-related issues, promote local prevention activities, and showcase how your organization is providing necessary support and resources to victims of sexual assault and their families. This not only offers reporters a more comprehensive picture of this complex issue, but also provides tangible examples for them to include in their stories. Below are step-by-step suggestions for how to connect and generate interest with media in your area.

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- Identify local outlets - An initial scan of your local media outlets is important in identifying your target list of reporters. Ask yourself:
  - Who am I trying to reach?
  - What local media outlets do they read or visit online?
  - What are the local broadcast news affiliates, daily newspapers, blogs, and magazines?
- Build a Targeted Press list - Build a press list including contact information for each outlet and the reporter(s) you plan to contact. You can use a media service that provides contact information with a subscription, scan the outlet's web site for info, or contact the news station or publication for the email and phone number of the reporter you wish to reach. Search for relevant stories at each outlet and target reporters who write on relevant topics.
- Deliver Your News
  - Write an email pitch - Some rules of thumb include personalizing as much as possible by referencing a reporter's relevant past stories; keeping it brief and to-the-point; and mentioning that you have images, experts to comment, etc.
  - Draft and distribute your press release - Craft a press release about your SAAM initiative and share the release with reporters on your media list. A sample press release is included in the addendum of this packet.
- Follow up - Following up is very important because reporters are inundated with email, making it easy for news to get lost in the shuffle. The best way to reach a reporter is usually on the phone or with a second email. After multiple attempts at getting in touch

with a reporter, try a new contact at the same outlet.

## **TIPS FOR TALKING TO REPORTERS**

You've done the outreach and have a reporter's attention. Remember these tips as you speak with the media:

- Stay on message.
  - Know what you want to say ahead of the conversation so that you can guide the discussion the way you want.
  - Have specific examples of why this issue impacts everyone.
  - Keep your talking points in mind to keep a consistent core message.
  - Have two to three credible, strong, and appealing messages you commit to getting across no matter where the reporter takes the questions.
- Keep it simple.
  - Think of your responses in sound bites.
  - Assume your audience is not an "expert."
  - Be positive – commit that 95% of what you say will be about your value, vision, and plans and not about criticizing opponents or their criticisms of your organization.
- Remember that it is a two-way conversation, and you do not have to answer anything you don't feel comfortable discussing.
  - Get what you want out of the interview, not just what the reporter wants, by delivering your message in every interview, to every question, every time.
  - Pivot responses so as to answer the questions you want to be asked.

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- Prepare for the most dreaded questions – they could be asked.
- Be responsive and respectful so they're willing to work with you in the future.
  - Follow up to make sure they got all the information they needed, and offer further information if relevant.
  - Don't get thrown off – stick to a measured tone and remember to return to positive, value-based messages.
  - Know what you don't know – it's okay not to answer every question.

## GENERAL MEDIA RELATIONS DOS AND DON'TS

### Do

- Target messages to specific audiences
- Personalize communications tactics to your specific state
- Be proactive and stay ahead of the conversation
- Share your state's messaging about sexual assault awareness and prevention with all staff to encourage consistent messaging, as staff may engage with different external stakeholders

### Don't

- Wait until your important work is finished to inform stakeholders (i.e., local government officials, college students, faculty and/or staff, etc.) about it - instead, get broad input along the way to ensure everyone is aware of the SAAM strategy
- Forget that communication is a two-way street and only respond when media or stakeholders contact you - instead, be the first to engage and follow up; also be proactive in soliciting external stakeholder validation

- Assume that because it's on your website, people know about it - instead, share your messaging and events across a variety of platforms

## ADDITIONAL MEDIA RELATIONS TACTICS

In addition to direct outreach to reporters, outlined below are additional ways you can engage with media:

### Letters to the Editor

Submitting a letter to the editor to a local newspaper or media outlet is an opportunity to share your message with a wide audience in response to recent coverage of sexual violence. These letters should be drafted to achieve the following:

- (1). highlight the resources and support offered by your organization,
- (2). promote awareness of and participation in SAAM,
- (3). inform your community of an upcoming local SAAM event and (4) make a point that was omitted or correct misstated information from a news story, editorial or another letter to the editor.

### To increase your chances of getting published:

- Follow the newspaper word count guideline (typically around 250 words).
- Respond directly and in a timely manner to breaking news or a recently published article/opinion piece
- Follow suggested messaging to highlight the importance of awareness and prevention and to provide accessible examples of intervention (directly or via a third party).

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- It is important to underscore that the letter is being written by someone in the field, who knows first-hand the significance of the issue.
- Email your letter in the body of an email to the appropriate outlet contact.
  - Include “Letter re: [your topic or article name]” in email subject line.
- Once published, further leverage supporting messaging by encouraging local stakeholders to post links to the letter on owned media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook.

## **News Article Comments**

Commenting directly on a local news article is an opportunity to further drive SAAM messaging. Submitting online comments can promote SAAM by emphasizing the benefits of awareness, reminding the public that prevention is possible and of the roles we all play, and offering resource materials. Comments also provide the opportunity to make a point that was omitted and/or correct misstated information in the original story. Some tips for engaging in the comments include:

- Underscore that the comment is being written by someone in the field, who knows first-hand the significance of the issue.
- Keep comments clear and brief, and do not engage in a back and forth with opposing viewpoints
- Emphasize why sexual assault awareness is important and how local influencers and new voices can make an impact.

## **Social Media Sharing**

Once a story is published about your SAAM initiative or quotes or mentions your organization, feel free to share it far and wide via your social media channels. Tag the reporter and/or outlet in the post and ensure your networks see the great work you are doing to prevent sexual violence. Learn more about how to leverage social media in your efforts.

## **E-Blast to Drive Engagement**

While not a direct media engagement tactic, e-blasts are a great way to energize your supporters about SAAM and show how they can participate. The more involvement from the community, the greater story you will have to tell the media about your SAAM efforts. A sample e-blast is included in the addendum of this packet.

## REFERENCES

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# ***SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE***

Press Contact Name

Organization Name

Email, Phone Number

## **PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **[INSERT ORG NAME] to Participate in Sexual Assault Awareness Month Campaign 2017 Theme, “Engaging New Voices,” Focuses on Expanding Prevention Efforts**

CITY, STATE] – [DATE] This April, [INSERT ORGANIZATION] will [engage/collaborate with/bring together] the broader community as part of its annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign. This year’s theme, “Engaging New Voices” builds on the idea that we are stronger together, and that new organizations and community members are needed to expand sexual assault prevention efforts and help the next generation foster attitudes that promote healthy relationships, equality and respect.

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, [INSERT ORG NAME] will bring the theme of “Engaging New Voices” to life by [Insert a few sentences describing key activities planned in your community, such as events, grants, community outreach, etc.].

[Insert QUOTE from your organization’s leadership about what you hope to achieve/how you hope to make an impact as part of your SAAM efforts. Consider commenting on the fact that we all have a role to play in the prevention of sexual assault, and how that ties into this year’s theme. Feel free to use the talking points included in this packet to shape your message]

Beyond SAAM activities this April, [INSERT ORG NAME] leads a wide range of initiatives to prevent sexual assault. These include [insert information on relevant programs and activities].

SAAM is organized nationally by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

#### **ABOUT [INSERT ORG NAME]**

[Insert boilerplate language about your organization, including your website]

#### **ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN**

Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an annual awareness and prevention campaign observed in April. This year’s theme is “Engaging New Voices.” For more information on the national campaign, visit our 2017 Campaign page.

## ***SAMPLE E-BLAST TEXT***

Mark your calendars! April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) and this year's campaign theme is "Engaging New Voices." We're calling on new voices to join us in preventing sexual violence and giving them the tools they need to become advocates for change. These voices include:

- Members of Greek Life
- Coaches
- Parents
- Faith Leaders

From believing survivors to modeling healthy behavior to addressing inappropriate conduct, we all have a role to play in preventing sexual violence. It is critical that new voices are brought into the mix to expand prevention efforts and help the next generation foster attitudes that promote healthy relationships, equality, and respect.

Here's how you can engage in SAAM throughout the month:

[insert details about relevant local activities, social media, etc.].

For more information about the 2017 SAAM campaign and to spread the word, visit [www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam). [Or insert your own URL]