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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Preventing sexual violence is bigger than football & survivors deserve our support

Steubenville, Ohio, has been under a microscope over the last two years. Every time this case re-enters the news, we have to remind ourselves of the impact these crimes have had on this survivor. Over the last two years, many survivors have called our resource line and rape crisis centers wondering why their case never saw a day in court or wondering why the national media didn't do something to help them, because unfortunately, what happened there also happens every day in other cities and towns. The trauma of sexual violence is long-lasting, and our support extends to survivors everywhere.

The case had ripple effects beyond Steubenville and revealed survivors needed support across Ohio. As a result, we focused our energy on supporting these men, women and children impacted by sexual violence.

These ripples continue. As a society, we have to look at how we view treatment and prevention. The juvenile justice system is focused on rehabilitation. Research shows that adolescents who sexually abuse respond well to such rehabilitation and are more likely than adults to stop their abusive behaviors.<sup>1</sup> Is labeling someone a sex offender the solution to preventing sexual violence? If we want to prevent these crimes from happening, we have to take a multi-layered approach and stop the violence before it happens, while at the same time helping all those impacted after-the-fact. We have to equip youth with skills to be engaged bystanders and step in to act when they see something concerning happening. And we have to pay attention

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<sup>1</sup> Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R., & Chaffin, M. (2009, December). Juveniles who commit sex offenses against minors [NCJ 227763]. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/227763.pdf>

to the research that treatment can be effective with many adolescents. Survivors deserve our full attention to prevent these crimes from being committed, both at first-time perpetration and by employing protective factors that decrease reoffending behavior.

In regards to the Steubenville case, the focus shouldn't be about whether someone can play football. Instead, what if we flip it and focused on how football, and other male-dominated sports, can act as a catalyst to change the culture of sexual violence? In sports - from high school football to the NFL – it's a critical time for coaches and male athletes to lead by example and take a stand against rape and other forms of intimate partner violence. There are small, every day steps that can be taken that can have large, widespread impact on our communities. Getting involved with programs like *Coaching Boys into Men* can be critical for having conversations about healthy relationships and respect. We need to be having ongoing conversations with the young people in our lives about rape, respect and consent. Sometimes, these conversations can make us feel uncomfortable, but they are critical if we want to see better outcomes for survivors and communities.

#### **Additional Resources to Continue the Conversation:**

- **NSVRC's Fact Sheet, People Who Commit Sexual Violence:**  
[http://nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_nsvrc\\_factsheet\\_media-packet\\_people-who-commit-sexual-violence.pdf](http://nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_people-who-commit-sexual-violence.pdf)
- **Coaching Boys into Men:**  
[http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/section/our\\_work/men\\_and\\_boys/\\_coaching\\_leadership/](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/section/our_work/men_and_boys/_coaching_leadership/)
- **OAESV's Stand Up bystander intervention video and discussion guide:**  
<http://www.oaesv.org/standup/>
- **Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers:**  
<http://www.atsa.com/>
- **Engaging bystanders:**  
<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-fact-sheets/media-packet-engaging-bystanders>
- **Best practices for engaging youth as partners in sexual violence prevention:**  
<http://nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-sexual-assault-awareness-month-guides/best-practices-engaging-youth>
- **Becoming an agent of social change: A guide for youth activists:**  
<http://nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-sexual-assault-awareness-month-guides/becoming-agent-social-change>
- **Understanding sexual violence: Tips for parents and caregivers:**  
<http://nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-sexual-assault-awareness-month-fact-sheets/understanding-sexual>

#### **About OAESV and NSVRC**

As Ohio's statewide coalition, OAESV advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

For more information, visit [www.oaesv.org](http://www.oaesv.org), [www.twitter.com/OhioAllianceESV](https://twitter.com/OhioAllianceESV) and <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ohio-Alliance-to-End-Sexual-Violence/333035558365>.

Founded by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape in 2000, NSVRC identifies, develops and disseminates resources regarding all aspects of sexual violence prevention and intervention.

For more, visit [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org), [www.facebook.com/nsvrc](https://www.facebook.com/nsvrc) and [www.twitter.com/nsvrc](https://twitter.com/nsvrc).