

# Media Outreach Packet

## Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2020

### AUDIENCES TO ENGAGE

The “I Ask for Consent” campaign provides a great opportunity to empower all of us to put consent into practice. The issue has reached heightened awareness post #MeToo, and more and more people are wondering how they can make a difference. Since understanding of consent can vary widely across different communities, there are some key audiences whom it is particularly important to reach with SAAM’s messages about consent and should serve as a focus for media outreach efforts:

- Emerging adults are at an age where learning positive norms around consent is crucial, and they play an important role in holding their peers accountable for normalizing sexual violence. How can we encourage teens and young adults to be good bystanders and practice consent in everyday situations?
- Youth should never be forced without consent to show physical affection to an adult, even if they’re a relative or family friend. How can we teach kids that it is okay to speak honestly and openly about their personal boundaries?
- Parents play an important role in teaching their kids about consent, healthy relationships, and communication. How can parents teach kids that the choices they make about their bodies, and the consent they choose to give or not give, deserve to be respected?

### 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.

#### About SAAM 2020

- 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 19th anniversary with the theme “I Ask” to empower everyone to put consent into practice.
- 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.
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month is about more than awareness – our ultimate goal is prevention.
- Since consent is a clear, concrete example of what it takes to end sexual harassment, abuse, and assault, this year’s campaign shares the message that asking for consent is a normal and necessary part of sex.

## 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 67 American men have experienced rape or attempted rape (Smith et al., 2017).
  - Despite misconceptions, the prevalence of false reporting for sexual assault crimes is low – between two percent and 10 percent (Lisak et al., 2010).
- The good news is that prevention is possible and it's happening.
  - Individuals, communities, and the private sector are already successfully combating the risk of sexual harassment, misconduct, and abuse through conversations, programs, policies, and research-based tools that promote safety, respect, and equality.
- For more information, refer to NSVRC's SAAM resources and fact sheets, including "[Your Consent Guide](#)" and "[We Can Stop Sexual Assault, Harassment, and Abuse Before They Happen.](#)"

## NEWS HOOKS

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

- Highlight steps or policies that your organization and others have taken to champion the power of asking. This would be particularly interesting if there is data to support that the policies and actions helped improve your community's sense of safety.
- Identify local partners that could work with your facility to support prevention efforts and the roles we all play, including youth organizations and schools and universities. Work collaboratively to identify appropriate events and activities to cross-promote or collaborate to create an event focused on SAAM and 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 fact sheets ([Your Consent Guide](#) and [We Can Stop Sexual Assault, Harassment, and Abuse Before They Happen](#)) and the [Ask for Consent Infographic](#) to provide further background on the complexities of consent and steps their readers can take 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.

- 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 website 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.
  - 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
- 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:

- Highlight the resources and support offered by your organization,
- Promote awareness of and participation in SAAM,
- Inform your community of an upcoming local SAAM event, and/or
- 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 suggested messaging to highlight the importance of awareness and prevention and to provide accessible examples of intervention (directly or via a third party).

- 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.

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Press Contact Name  
 Organization Name  
 Email, Phone Number

### PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **[INSERT ORG NAME] Kicks Off Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

*As part of the national 2020 "I Ask" Campaign [INSERT ORG NAME] joins the National Sexual Violence Resource Center in empowering individuals to put consent into practice.*

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, "I Ask for Consent" builds on the idea that consent is a normal and necessary part of sex. The goal of the campaign is to empower all of us to put consent into practice.

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, [INSERT ORG NAME] will bring the theme of "I Ask for Consent" 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]

## **SAMPLE E-BLAST TEXT**

Mark your calendars! April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) and this year's campaign theme is "I Ask for Consent."

Since consent is a clear, concrete example of what it takes to end sexual harassment, abuse, and assault, this year's campaign helps to empower all of us to put consent into practice.

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 2020 SAAM campaign and to spread the word, visit [www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam).

[Or insert your own URL]

## **REFERENCES**

Lisak, D., Gardinier, L., Nicksa, S. C., & Cote, A. M. (2010). False allegations of sexual assault: An analysis of ten years of reported cases. *Violence Against Women*, 16(12), 1318-1334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801210387747>

Smith, S. G., Chen, J., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 state report*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>