

TOOLKIT: Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2016 Engagement

INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) appreciates the vital role of State coalitions, community rape crisis centers and other groups in the success of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM).

This April's campaign focuses on the ways individuals, communities, and the private sector can take action to promote safety, respect, and equality. Year-round we hear from partners in the field who participate actively in SAAM despite the challenges of limited staff-time and funds and the already demanding role you play in your community. We stand in awe of these efforts and offer these suggestions in support of your SAAM engagement and prevention efforts.

The following recommendations are to help establish ongoing positive conversations with key audiences to promote your SAAM efforts and educate them on how they can play a role in prevention. You may utilize these tools by selecting the options that will be most effective for your campaign goals and audiences. We encourage your team to tailor these tactics to bolster your individual unique efforts. The NSVRC supports and encourages the diverse ways that the field helps to build credibility and amplify SAAM messaging.

The following toolkit includes suggested tips and potential opportunities to engage media and target audiences around SAAM 2016. SAAM outreach efforts look different in each state and community. Please let us know how we can support your outreach efforts.

Thank you for your partnership and support of this campaign.

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Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2016

This year's SAAM theme focuses on sexual violence prevention. SAAM 2016 is a toolkit for individuals, communities, and the private sector. These materials can be used to engage many different audiences about sexual violence prevention.

Topic: Sexual violence prevention

Logo: The general Sexual Assault Awareness Month logo is used for this campaign.

Slogan: Prevention is possible! / ¡Posibilidades de prevención!

Campaign Resources:

[Brochure](#)

[What is Sexual Violence](#)

[The Impact of Sexual Violence](#)

[Prevention is Possible](#)

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Identify your audience

- Target messages to specific audiences (e.g., helping business leaders develop policies which promote prevention);
- Personalize communications tactics to your 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 with all stakeholders;
- Identify partners in your state to amplify and validate SAAM messages.

Engaging outreach

- Timing is important, reach out to stakeholders (i.e., local government officials, college students, faculty and/or staff, etc.) before your work is finished. Get broad input along the way to ensure everyone is aware of the SAAM strategy;
- Take the lead with contacting media and stakeholders. You can be the first to reach out, follow-up and proactively engage partners; and
- Share your message and events creatively and utilize a variety of platforms. Your website is a great place to start, but be sure to get your message out and about.

TARGET AUDIENCES

It is important to customize different talking points to each of your target audiences while keeping a consistent core message. Key audiences may include:

- Local business leaders
- Community leaders
- College faculty and staff
- College students and student groups
- Parents
- Federal, state and local legislators
- Health care professionals
- Other groups (e.g., law enforcement, campus crisis centers, community resources, etc.)

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TALKING POINTS

To foster a shared accurate understanding of sexual violence and prevention, we have provided the following suggested talking points to aid your team in driving these conversations.

- Nationally, 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 15th anniversary with the theme “Prevention is possible” to help individuals, communities and the private sector understand how they can take action to promote safety, respect and equality to stop sexual assault before it happens.
- Sexual assault is a serious and widespread problem.
 - Sexual violence is any type of unwanted sexual contact. This can include words and actions of a sexual nature against a person’s will and without their consent.
 - 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.
 - Nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men have experienced sexual violence victimization other than rape at some point in their lifetime.
 - Sexual assault is a public health issue impacting women, men and children throughout their lives and can be devastating for individuals, families and communities.
 - 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.
- The good news is that prevention is possible and it’s happening.
 - By promoting safe behaviors, thoughtful policies and healthy relationships, we can create safe and equitable communities where every person is treated with respect.
 - 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.
 - The ongoing increase in efforts to prevent sexual violence on college campuses – the focus of last year’s SAAM campaign – is a promising illustration of recent progress.
- Sexual violence prevention requires many voices and roles. We’re calling on individuals, communities and the private sector to be a part of the solution by taking action during and beyond SAAM to create the cultural shift necessary to eliminate sexual violence once and for all.
- Individuals can get involved by

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- Intervening to stop harmful behavior;
- Promoting and modeling healthy attitudes, behaviors and relationships; and
- Believing and assisting survivors.

- Communities can make a difference by
 - Creating and strengthening policies to promote safety, equality and respect;
 - Assessing the risks in their environment;
 - Promoting respectful behaviors;
 - Providing support for survivors;
 - Holding those who harm others accountable and ensuring that appropriate treatment options are available.

- The private sector can help by
 - Promoting prevention and support for survivors through policies and education;
 - Modeling healthy attitudes and relationships in engagement with clients and consumers;
 - Promoting positive messages and behaviors through marketing campaigns and advertising content; and
 - Investing funding to make sexual violence prevention a corporate social responsibility priority.

MEDIA ADVOCACY

Engaging media presents a significant opportunity to engage with audiences around sexual violence prevention. Try the following approaches:

- Pitch SAAM-related stories and opinion pieces to state and local news, education and community reporters that have previously covered sexual violence or health related news. For example, you may consider drafting an op-ed or letter to the editor on prevention or awareness.
- Collaborate with area business leaders, local law enforcement and student leaders in the area to host an informational panel for students and invite media to attend.
- Invite media to tour your facility to educate the public on the important work your team does.
- When speaking with media, offer to share the NSVRC [media packet](#) to provide further background on the complexities of sexual violence.

See below for some suggested tips for engaging with local media.

Talking with Reporters

If you feel comfortable speaking with reporters, SAAM presents an ideal opportunity to raise awareness around sexual violence-related issues, promote prevention activities happening on local college campuses 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.

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When speaking to a reporter, remember to:

- 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 2 - 3 credible, strong and appealing messages you commit to getting across no matter where the reporter takes the questions.
- Keep it simple. Complexity, particularly in video interviews, causes confusion.
 - 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 most for the hardest questions — they will 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 of the information they needed, and offer further information if relevant.
 - Don’t get thrown off — stick to a measured tone and don’t get baited into attacking the opposition by returning to key positive, value-based messages.
 - Know what you don’t know — it’s okay not to answer every question.

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 can 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.

Click [here](#) for a sample SAAM letter to the editor that provides a customizable template for addressing sexual violence on college campuses for local or campus media outlets.

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 (e.g. Re: “Local Move Theater Screens ‘Spotlight’ Documentary Amid Statute of Limitations Legislation).
- 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 under a news article can promote SAAM by emphasizing the benefits of awareness, reminding the public that prevention is possible, 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.

- It is important to 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 in the comment section.
- Discuss clear-cut ways that sexual violence prevention is possible, emphasizing steps that can be taken locally.

SOCIAL MEDIA

You can use social networking sites to engage online communities in promoting sexual violence prevention. Social media tools can help spread awareness and advocate for social change. Social media posts can help you spread the word about SAAM.

Incorporate these [SAAM graphics](#) into your posts to help provide consistency across the campaign and offer a visual element that viewers may be more likely to share.

- Develop blog posts focused on SAAM and/or promote an article about SAAM via social media posts and/or tweets.
- Hashtags highlight important words or topics on social media. Adding a “#” at the beginning of the word makes it easy to search. We use **#SAAM** to connect all SAAM-related posts.
- Respond to Twitter or Facebook posts from individuals or groups participating in SAAM in your state to show support of their efforts.

Start the conversation with these suggested posts:

- April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month! The #SAAM 2016 campaign theme is Prevention is Possible! www.nsvrc.org/saam
- What are you planning for #SAAM? Share your Sexual Assault Awareness Month events at www.nsvrc.org/calendar

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Identify local partners that could work with you to support the safe and healthy development of young people during SAAM, including faith-based organizations, community groups focused on LGBTQ or people of color and other external organizations focused on college-age audiences and/or college campuses.

Work collaboratively to identify appropriate events and activities to cross-promote or collaborate to create an event focused on SAAM. Working with outside organizations allows you to bolster staffing capacity and expand your reach to broader audiences.

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

State elected officials play an important role on sexual violence issues and their continued support for policy and initiatives that address this complex issue is crucial. During SAAM month — and beyond — it is important 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.

In conversations and meetings with state elected officials, it is useful to have clear and concise messages about SAAM. When you or your validators meet with legislators, prepare for the discussion with your talking points, FAQs and all collateral materials that contain your message to share during desk-side briefings. For additional context, invite local elected and their staff for a tour of your facility to educate the public on the important work your team does in the field.