



#Parents4Prevention: A Toolkit

Sexual Assault Awareness Month | April 2016 | www.iowacasa.org/saam-2016



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Toolkit Overview

Purpose of the toolkit

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities on how to prevent it. The 2016 theme is "Prevention is Possible."

While sexual violence is a widespread problem, we believe that it can be prevented. Individuals, communities, and the private sector can all take action to promote safety, respect, and equality. Find out more information about SAAM by visiting the **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)** at www.nsvrc.org/saam.

Have questions? [Contact us at communications@iowacasa.org](mailto:communications@iowacasa.org)

How to use the toolkit

IowaCASA staff and advocates wanted to take NSVRC's *Prevention is Possible* theme one step further by creating a "**Parents for Prevention**" campaign. Research shows that having a conversation with our children and youth early on about sexual health and sexual violence is critical to ensuring safe and healthy communities.

But how does a parent even begin to have that conversation? **Included in this toolkit, you will find some great resources that can help parents and advocates begin an effective and thoughtful conversation about sexual violence from birth through adulthood.**

You can also keep up with IowaCASA throughout the month of April 2016 by following the hashtag **#Parents4Prevention** on your favorite social media channels.





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In addition, IowaCASA will be hosting a **#30DaysofSAAM** conversation on social media discussing all these issues and more. Be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/iowaCASA), Twitter (www.twitter.com/iowaCASA), and Pinterest (www.pinterest.com/iowaCASA) so you can join the conversation and get more resources too!

Change your profile photo(s) on social media in support of sexual violence survivors by clicking here: <http://twibbon.com/Support/saam-2016>

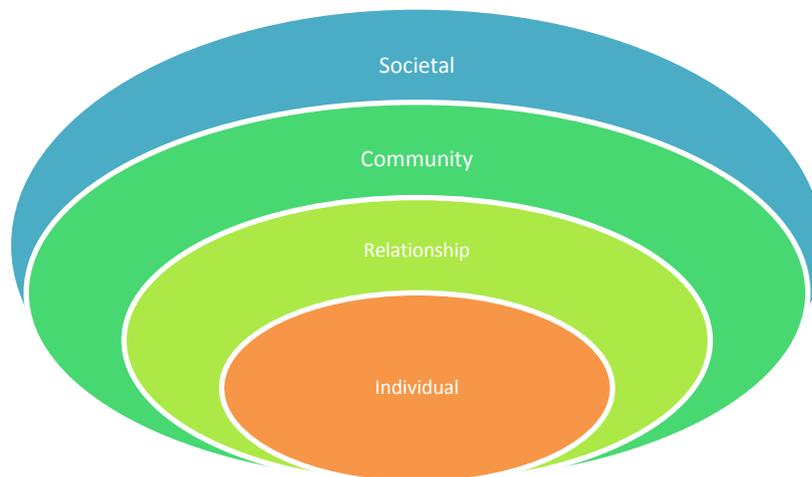
An important note:

We recognize that many of us acting as parents, mentors, and advocates may not have known to ask these questions and have either a) had a child or known a child who was sexually abused or assaulted; and/or b) been a victim of sexual abuse and/or sexual violence. This is NOT your fault. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of people not to rape or sexually assault others. Nonetheless, we hope you will find this toolkit helpful when working with youth or young adults, and don't hesitate to contact the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault if you have any questions or concerns by emailing communications@iowacasa.org. Also feel free to contact your local rape crisis program by clicking here: <http://www.iowacasa.org/#!/ia-sa-programs/cpvl>



Creating Change

Prevention is possible – but how do we do it?



Sexual violence is a public health issue. To create a society without sexual violence, we need to look at how our individual behavior, our relationships, community, and broader social norms either support or discourage sexual violence. This approach allows us to address the factors that put people at risk for experiencing or perpetrating sexual violence through their lifetimes. Prevention efforts can be broken out into three main types: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention stops violence before it happens. Secondary prevention aims to reduce the impact of violence that has already occurred. Tertiary prevention aims to soften the impact of ongoing violence and its lasting effects. **The resources within this toolkit focus on primary prevention.**

What is primary prevention?

Primary prevention stops violence *before* it happens. Primary prevention addresses a specific risk or protective factor that contributes to sexual violence and defines a target population. Examples of primary prevention strategies include:

- Increasing a community's readiness for prevention through education and capacity-building



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- Building or enhancing community prevention coalitions
- Mobilizing specific communities that may be at a particular risk
- Promoting organizational policies to prevent sexual violence
- Developing or promoting social norms campaigns
- Supporting policies that promote sexual violence prevention

The resources within the toolkit focus on the primary prevention strategy of developing or promoting positive social norms.



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How to Talk About Consent with Youth

For parents, advocates, and educators that regularly work with youth, it's important to have age-appropriate conversations about healthy relationships. Talking about consent and what consent looks like for young people is critical.

Here are some helpful tips to consider when you have conversations with youth:¹

- Teach children and youth to ask permission and listen for their playmate's agreement before touching or hugging. Ask them before giving them a hug or a kiss, and respect their answer.
- Help create empathy within children and youth by explaining how something they have done may have hurt someone. Encourage children and youth to imagine how he or she might feel in a similar situation.
- Teach children and youth that "no" and "stop" are important words and should be honored. Model this with them.
- Avoid forcing a child to hug, touch, or kiss anybody for any reason—especially if they don't want to.
- Provide children and youth language to recognize when you are respecting their boundaries by modeling, such as, "I hear you don't want to do this and I respect that."
- Teach your children the proper names for their body parts, and allow them to talk about their bodies in a way that feels comfortable to them, without shame or judgment.

For teens and young adults:

- Work to build teenagers' self-esteem. In middle school, bullying shifts to specifically target identity, and this may mean that a teen's self-esteem can start to plummet around age 13. Body positivity is also important to help build esteem. Remark regularly about a teen's talents, skills, etc.

¹ Royse, Alyssa, Joanna Schroeder, Julie Gillis, and Jamie Utt. "Healthy Sex Talk: Teaching Kids Consent, Ages 1-21." *Everyday Feminism*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2013. Web. 09 Mar. 2016.

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/03/teaching-kids-consent-ages-1-21/>



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- When you're talking to middle and high schooler as about relationships, ask questions like, "How do you know whether your partner is ready to kiss you?" or "How do you think you can tell if someone is interested in you?"
- Talk honestly with kids about partying. Ask them what they would do if they saw a peer hitting on someone who looks uncomfortable, or trying to make out with someone who is too drunk to consent. What resources do they have to help them? Teens want to learn, and they will find a way to get information about sex. If you are the one providing the informing in a loving, honest, and consistent manner, then they will carry that information out into the world with them.

For helpful suggestions about how to talk to kids about sex and sexuality from Planned Parenthood, click here:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/parents/talking-to-kids-about-sex-and-sexuality>

For a video on what consent looks like with middle schoolers, click here:

<http://www.teachconsent.org/#ask>

For a series of consent videos most appropriate for high school or college students, click here:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens/relationships/consent-and-rape>





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Talking with Youth About Healthy Masculinity

When many of us think about ending violence against women and girls, the most common place that parents start is by talking to girls and young women. We have less experience talking with boys and young men. But research shows that between 95-99% of sexual assaults are carried out by men.²

It's helpful to include children of all genders in conversations about healthy masculinity because gender is fluid and can change over time. Transgender men and masculine women may be at particular risk of being negatively impacted by harmful ideas about masculinity.³

Here are some helpful tips to consider when you have conversations with youth about healthy masculinity:⁴

1. Meet them where they're at.

Many boys and young men may not have thought critically about how society portrays masculinity. It may be assumed to just be normal—that this is just part of being a man. So they may not see why it's something important enough to discuss. At the same time, many boys and young men may be uncomfortable with how they are represented in the media and don't identify with the beefy, fighting, womanizing men in the movies. It's important not to assume anything about one's beliefs, or attempt to change them. The point is

² Breiding, Matthew J., PhD, Sharon G. Smith, PhD, Kathleen C. Basile, PhD, Mikel L. Walters, PhD, Jieru Chen, MS, and Melissa T. Merrick, PhD. "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization — National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 05 Sept. 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm>>.

³ Jones, Michael "MJ". "When Our Strategies for Healing Are Harmful to Our Communities: A Note to Masculine of Center Folks". N.p. 11 Dec. 2015. Black Girl Dangerous. Web. 9 Mar 2016. <http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2015/12/when-our-strategies-for-healing-are-harmful-to-our-communities-a-note-to-masculine-of-center-folks/>

⁴ Kim, Sandra. "6 Ways to Talk to Your Son About Male Violence and Healthy Masculinity". N.P. 30 Jan. 2014. Everyday Feminism. Web. 9 Mar. 2016. <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/6-ways-to-talk-about-male-violence-and-healthy-masculinity/>



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not to create another narrow box for them to fit into but to expand the choices they have available to them, and support them in exploring what masculinity is and how it aligns with their values.

2. Help them to identify male role models that they know.

While the media may glorify violent men, in real life these “action figure stereotypes” are usually not the ones we admire. As a society, we tend to admire men who are responsible, empathetic, caring, and contribute to the community. Ask children and youth how these men show strength in their relationships and how they treat people. Helping them to see how the men they respect do not fit this traditional notion expands their understanding of masculinity and gives them more options.

3. Discuss how media presents the ideal man, and why that may be problematic.

The media is filled with portrayals of fictional male characters who are primarily rewarded for fighting and getting the girl. Ask children and youth how this affects their idea of how men should act, and compare it to how men they respects act. Oftentimes, young boys and men haven’t really compared the two and hear the traditional notion much more strongly to the point where they don’t see or understand other ways of being a man.

4. Discuss how traditional masculinity shows up in their own behavior.

While many men are not violent, traditional masculinity encourages other behaviors that are normalized in our society. This includes street harassment, a sense of sexual entitlement, use of physical intimidation over smaller people, and more. It’s important for children and youth to connect the dots between more violent acts and more socially sanctioned behaviors stemming from so-called “male domination.” The more aware men and boys are about their own behavior, the more they can choose whether or not they want to continue doing it.





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5. Discuss the role of traditional masculinity in violence, particularly violence against women.

Since youth and children primarily are socialized to think traditional masculinity is the ideal, it can take time for them to connect it with something they're against—like violence. Work backwards and discuss what can lead a man to feel comfortable with becoming violent. While traditional masculinity does not necessarily always lead to violence, it does support male domination over others. This creates a permissive culture where “boys will be boys,” where “he can’t control himself sometimes,” and where “she was asking for it.”

6. Discuss how nonviolent men can contribute to ending violence.

Many men who are not violent think that because they're not doing it, that's enough. But that should be the floor and not the ceiling for men's engagement in the efforts to end violence. Sharing statistics about domestic violence and sexual violence with men and boys can help them see that they probably know several women and men who have been abused, but they may not have had the opportunity to acknowledge it before. Show them different ways they can be involved—whether it's learning more about the issue, volunteering at nonprofits, or discussing it with their male and female peers. Remind them that they can do something to stop the violence.

Other things to consider:

- We know the majority of sexual violence is committed by men. We also know that most men don't sexually assault others. We offer these tips to encourage ongoing conversations so youth know it is okay to live their gender(s) in ways that fit them.
- If a child is already being attacked or harassed because of the way they embody their masculinity, be mindful of this fact. Policing of masculinity can start before our children are even born, in the form of gifting “boy-colored”





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baby clothes and only giving “boy-themed” toys to infants assigned male at birth.

- Race, class, sexual orientation, and disability all impact how we talk about masculinity and whose masculinity is valued.
- Sometimes masculinity is used as a code word for talking about power. Brainstorm other ideas with youth about how to feel a sense of personal power in their lives.



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Tips on Daycare, Childcare, and Schools

Choosing a program for children can be one of the most stressful, complicated, and emotional decisions a parent makes. There are many factors to take into account: program activities, the schedule, the cost associated with the program, how it matches the child's needs and interest, and more.

Something that also should play a role in that decision is whether or not the school has a child sexual abuse prevention policy.

Here are some questions you should consider when selecting a program for children—and the answers you should expect to hear:⁵

1. What is the program's policy on child sexual abuse prevention?

Make sure any program has a comprehensive approach to preventing sexual violence and child abuse.

2. How does the program screen staff?

The program should be knowledgeable about who sexually abuses children and what puts children at risk to be abused. Ask how they screen employees and volunteers and be wary if they rely solely on criminal background checks. They should use written applications and personal interviews to learn about what previous experience someone has working with youth and to identify any potential warning signs. Criminal background checks are not enough.

3. Does the program check references?

Reference checks provide important opportunities to learn more about an applicant's experience. Programs should require applicants to include non-family members and should watch for gaps in references and ask about them.

4. What is the policy or code of conduct about interactions between employees/volunteers and youth?

⁵ Adapted from Stop It Now!

"Tip Sheet: What Parents Need To Know When Selecting A Program For Their Child." *Stop It Now!* N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-1>>.



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Programs should have a policy regarding staff and youth interactions. This should include examples of positive interactions and you should feel comfortable with how they define appropriate and inappropriate interactions.

5. How are interactions between adults and children monitored?

Programs that take seriously the safety of children understand the importance of both observation and taking action.

6. Has the program considered safety in the physical environment?

Safety in the physical layout can be often overlooked. Ensure all areas of the space are visible to others. Doors and windows should be kept open. There should be a sign-in form for anyone entering the premises not associated with the program.

7. How does the program handle situations of inappropriate behavior or allegations of sexual abuse?

Policies and procedures should be in place to deal with not only evidence of sexual abuse but breaches in policy about concerning behaviors. Some situations require an internal response while others should be handled by authorities. Programs with policies in place are better equipped to handle concerns than those who have not.

8. What training does staff and volunteers receive about preventing child sexual abuse?

Training is a great way that the program can send a message to staff and volunteers that they are serious about keeping children safe from abuse. Training should include information on how to identify signs of abuse and when it is appropriate to make a referral. They should also know what the procedures are for making a referral and the designated staff person to handle these referrals. Training should be ongoing and refresher courses should be made available. The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault would also be willing to work with programs to facilitate trainings—simple contact training@iowacasa.org.





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⁶Prevention steps can be taken at any time—before there is a concern that a child is being sexually abused, to re-establishing safety to prevent further abuse. By becoming educated about child sexual abuse, you are already becoming a proactive and protective adult.

Trust your gut—you may be the only one who can take action. Studies show that in as many as nine out of 10 cases, kids don't tell anyone when they are being sexually abused. It's up to adults to recognize behaviors that make kids vulnerable to sexual abuse. If something makes you uncomfortable, speak up. Your voice is the first line of defense in keeping kids safe. Talk to family members and other adults about safeguarding children.

Caring adults have a chance to recognize possible risk and take action to protect children. The most effective prevention takes place **before** there's a child victim to heal, or an offender to punish.

Helpful Tools and Tip Sheets:

- Safety in Daycare:
http://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/safety_in_daycare.pdf
- Talking to Parents About Their Child's Sexual Behaviors:
http://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/talking_with_parents.pdf
- Family Safety Planning for Parents of Children with Disabilities:
<http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-family-safety-planning-for-parents-of-children-with-disabilities>
- For more information and tip sheets, click here:
<http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance/prevention-tools>

⁶ "Prevention Tools." *Stop It Now!* N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance/prevention-tools>>.



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Interrupting Online Harassment

The intersection between sexual assault and cyberbullying exists mainly around teenagers and young adults.

While the basic elements of cyberbullying resemble “traditional” bullying and harassment, cyberbullying has the additionally painful element of inescapability—the tormenters can reach the victim at literally any time of day, in any place, including a person’s home or otherwise “safe space.”⁷

Sexual assault and cyberbullying can intersect on anonymous posting sites, such as Yik Yak or Whisper. This level of anonymity leads to threats of sexual violence that are difficult to trace, and taken less seriously teachers or law enforcement. The threat exists, but is nearly impossible for the threatened party to know who made the threat without the help of law enforcement or safety officers.

What parents and guardians can do

Parents and guardians need to be the one trusted place kids can go when things go wrong online and offline. Yet many kids will avoid telling parents or guardians about a cyberbullying incident because they fear it will make matters worse. Parents and guardians need to be supportive of the child or youth during this time. Cyberattacks have a lasting effect and literally will follow youth home.⁸

If your child or a young person you know is being harassed online, you can intervene by taking evidence (such as printed out posts, saved voicemails, screenshots of harassing text messages) to the school Title IX coordinator. Keep

⁷ "Cyberbullying and Sexual Harassment: FAQs about Cyberbullying and Title IX - NWLC." NWLC. *National Women's Law Center*, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2016. <<http://nwlc.org/resources/cyberbullying-and-sexual-harassment-frequently-asked-questions/>>.

⁸ "STOP Cyberbullying: What's the Parents' Role in This?" *STOP Cyberbullying: What's the Parents' Role in This?* STOP Cyberbullying, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2016. <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/prevention/parents_role.html>.



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record of everything, including correspondence with the school. Be persistent until the school acts in a way to keep your child safe.

What schools should do

Federally funded schools are required to act on cyberbullying under [Title IX](#). If the cyberbullying creates a hostile environment for a student and it is seen that the conduct would cause a substantial disruption in the school in the foreseeable future, action needs to be taken.

If cyberbullying and online sexual harassment are being perpetrated by a classmate, schools should be made aware and be held responsible for ending the behavior.



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Empowering Questions to Ask When Visiting a College Campus

All students have the right to an education free from sexual harassment and violence. Sadly, statistics show us that 1 out of 5 women and 1 out of 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college.⁹

Working with a young adult to find a school that respects everyone's bodies may seem overwhelming. One way to be proactive about preventing sexual violence and ensuring a young adult attends a school where everyone shares responsibility for ending sexual violence is by scheduling a campus visit. Asking about sexual violence awareness and prevention on campus gives you helpful information. This is useful even if the young adult will not live at school. This is useful even when attending a professional/technical school.

Qualities of effective prevention and awareness work on college campuses:

- Prevention and awareness materials talk about the responsibility to not rape or sexually violate others, and do not blame the survivor.
- Bystanders are given resources and training to intervene when they see a situation that may lead to a sexual assault.
- Sexual violence survivors are given many options for getting support.
- Sexual violence survivors are not forced to report their assault to law enforcement in order to access resources for healing.
- Schools have easy-to-understand, easy-to-find information about how to report a sexual assault, and what the process can look like after reporting.
- Materials addressing sexual violence use gender-inclusive language to ensure relevance for male survivors.

⁹ "Facts about Sexual Violence." *National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)* (n.d.): n. pag. Web. 10 Mar. 2016. <http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf>.



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Below are some questions you can ask students, faculty, or administrators. In general, the easier it is for students and administrators to answer your questions, the better they are doing at creating a culture where sexual violence is openly talked about and addressed.

Questions to ask current students:

- What does sexual assault awareness or prevention look like at this school?
- What can you tell me about the process for reporting sexual assault at this school?
- Where is the Title IX office on campus? Who would I talk to at that office to get more information?

Questions to ask faculty and administrators:

- Who handles reports of sexual assault at this school?
- What happens when sexual assault is reported?
- Are students required to report their assault to law enforcement in order to access support services?
- Does the school have Title IX policies? How is information about the school's Title IX policies communicated to students?
- How are penalties for sexual assault or misconduct determined? Is the process different if the assault is perpetrated by a fellow student? Administrator? Non-student?

To find out more about schools' responsibility to create education free from sexual violence, check out the resources at: KnowYourIX.org

As always, trust your gut. If something doesn't sound right, ask more questions.





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Organizing Parents & Caregivers to Change Social Norms

Having discussions about sexual violence that focus on the prevention of future incidents is the key to promoting a safe and just community without the threat or fear of violence.

One way to begin a dialogue is to organize a forum in your community with parents/caregivers about sexual violence prevention.

What is the purpose of organizing a parent/caregiver forum?

The purpose of organizing a parent/caregiver forum on issues surrounding the prevention of sexual violence is to provide space and opportunity for parents/caregivers to gather for open discussion about the prevention of sexual violence and the important role parents/caregivers play to prevent sexual violence.

Why should a forum on sexual violence prevention be geared to parents/caregivers?

Discussing how to stop sexual violence can be challenging, especially within the context of parenting/caregiving. However, parents/caregivers have a built in opportunity to change beliefs and understandings of how sexual violence happens in the community and how to change it.

How do you organize a parent/caregiver forum?

First, you must identify the issue(s) you want to highlight. Then, form a planning committee. Decide on the format of your forum. Typically a forum is held in a town hall meeting or open dialogue format. Decide the specifics—who do you need to secure as speakers, who do you need as panelists, who will your moderator be, what does your target audience look like, etc. It's also encouraged that you include confidential, professional sexual assault advocates who can provide support, if needed, to anyone whom may be triggered by the discussion.

After these details are determined, select the place and date. Forums can take place almost anywhere: a school, a daycare center, a library. Be creative. For





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more information about how to build a community forum, Faces and Voices of Recovery in Washington, D.C. has some great ideas and steps regarding logistics: <http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/sites/default/files/resources/ForumToolkitHR.pdf>

What are some questions or topics that you can ask as part of this forum?

- Consent. What is it and how can we teach it to our children?
- Why parents need to stop connecting violence to affection (i.e. “If he pulls your hair that means he likes you.”)
- How to empower children to speak up through bodily autonomy (i.e. “You don’t have to hug Aunt Nancy if you do not want to.”)
- Teaching kids that only secrets with an ending are acceptable. Emphasizing the difference between “Don’t tell, it’s a surprise party” and “this is our secret.”
- Why parents should stop teaching boys to “act like a man” and change cultural norms by teaching boys that it is acceptable to show emotion, walk away from a fight, and to play with any toy they choose.
- How can parents/caregiving encourage and model healthy relationships?
- How do we respect children’s bodily autonomy around diapering, toileting, bathing, and dressing?

Sexual violence feeds on silence. By organizing a forum, you are opening up space to talk about sexual violence. You are breaking the silence. Giving voice to this issue is changing the climate and fostering tools of support for ourselves *and* our children.



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Contact the Local Media and Change the Conversation

There are a number of ways to get the word out about your work to promote a society free from sexual violence. An effective way to do this is to submit a **letter to the editor** to your local newspaper or send out a **press release**.

Before writing a letter, it's always important to check with the news outlet about submission guidelines and review editing and publishing policies. In most cases, there will be a limit on the length of the letter (generally 250 words), and you may be required to provide contact information such as your name, address, and phone number. Oftentimes you can submit a letter to the editor either online or by email. Check with your local news outlet.

Sample letter to the editor:¹⁰

April marks Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a month where community members can come together to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate one another on how to prevent it.

The crime of sexual violence impacts all of us—our family members, our friends, and our neighbors. The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey estimates that one in five women in the U.S. has been raped within her lifetime. According to the organization 1in6, one in six men in the U.S. has experienced unwanted or abusive sexual acts before age 18. According to the Crime Victim Assistance Division, specially trained advocates in Iowa served 7,234 survivors of sexual violence across the state last year (SFY2015).

Sexual violence knows no boundaries. It impacts people of all ages and all background. It affects not only the survivor but their loved ones, our neighborhoods, and all of society. But prevention is possible.

¹⁰ Another example at NSVRC: http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/saam_2016_letter-to-the-editor.pdf



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Prevention of sexual violence starts with all of us. We must challenge victim-blaming, the harmful shaming of survivors who choose to disclose, and a problematic cultural acceptance that views rape and sexual violence as unavoidable.

As a community, we must come together to hold those who harm accountable and ensure that appropriate treatment options are available. Together, we can create a community where every single person is treated with respect and dignity.

Enough is enough. The time to act is now.

Different ways to personalize your letter to the editor

- **As a parent**, it's important that we teach our children about healthy relationships and consent...
- **As a survivor** of sexual violence, I don't want anybody else to have to go through what I did...
- **As an advocate** who works with survivors of sexual violence, it's important that we believe survivors when they disclose that they've been sexually assaulted...

Press releases are also an effective way of engaging the media. Especially if you are planning an event that you want participants and/or the media to show up for, a press release is a great way to get the word out. Remember to include the following: what, when, where, who, and why. The why is particularly important—ask yourself why the media should care, and then be sure to answer that question in your press release.





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Press release suggested format

Release Date

Contact info: *Who do you want the media to contact if they have any questions about the event or need to follow-up? This is usually a communications person or executive/assistant director.*

Headline: *Something engaging that will pique the interest of the media. Be sure to use plain English and don't be misleading. Feel free to include event details in your headline.*

Location and the Lead—The first paragraph of your press release should include all relevant details: the who, what, when, and where. This is “the lead.” Try to avoid jargon words and acronyms that the media may not understand without first explaining what they are or what they mean.

Support Information—We call this “the why.” Include information that may be of interest or that makes the event relevant to the media and community members. Why do people need to know about this event? Why should they come? This can be 2-3 paragraphs, and can include a quote from staff leadership (an executive director) or community person (an advocate or survivor, for example). You can also include helpful statistics that might illustrate why the issue is important.

End Mark ###

Organization “boilerplate”—include name and information about your agency, including mission, website, and whatever additional information you feel is relevant. Keep it brief.





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Sample Press release

April 1, 2016

Contact:

Matty Smith

Communications Specialist

(515) 421-4681

communications@iowacasa.org

¹¹The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault to hold prevention training on April 4 in Des Moines

DES MOINES—On April 4, 2016, the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) will hold a special training event at its office to discuss the prevention of sexual violence. April marks Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and participants will be encouraged to wear teal ribbons in honor of sexual violence survivors.

The event will take place at 1:00pm at the IowaCASA office, 3030 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines. The event will feature Executive Director Beth Barnhill and Prevention Coordinator KellyMarie Meek. Barnhill and Meek will talk to advocates and survivors about engaging parents in part of a year-long “Parents for Prevention” campaign.

According to the Crime Victim Assistance Division, specially trained advocates in Iowa served 7,234 survivors of sexual violence across the state in 2015. In addition, the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey estimates that one in five women in the U.S. has been raped within her lifetime. According to the organization 1in6, one in six men in the U.S. has experienced unwanted or abusive sexual acts before age 18.

¹¹ At the moment, this sample press release is an example *only*. The coalition will alert advocates if this kind of training should take place.



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“Research shows that by having a conversation with our children and youth early on about sexual violence is critical to preventing it,” Barnhill said. “By engaging more community members than even before, our goal is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate people on how to prevent it. While sexual violence is a widespread problem, we also believe it’s preventable. But prevention requires many voices and roles, which is why this training is so important.”

###

The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) connects sexual assault agencies across the state and helps provide resources, tools, and training to advocates who serve survivors of sexual violence. Our mission is to unite people and organizations to promote a society free from sexual violence and meet the diverse needs of survivors. For more information, visit www.iowacasa.org.

But who do you send the press release to?

Generally speaking, news outlets like to focus on local news. So if you’re having an event to talk about sexual violence prevention in Sioux City, it probably doesn’t make sense to advertise it to media outlets in Des Moines. Keep your targeted audience localized.

Here are some helpful tips for building a media list in your area:

- 1)** Create a list of news outlets in your area. Utilize Google as a search engine. Keep your search to within 50 miles of the event’s location. Include both newspapers and TV news outlets in your search and on your list.
- 2)** Search the news outlets’ websites to find a staff contact page. This can sometimes be difficult to find, but most news outlets will have a staff contact page with an editor’s contact information listed. Sometimes





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reporters will also be listed. Try to find a news editor to send your press release to, and include this person on your list.

- 3) Find out which journalists for each news outlet are reporting about your issue. Include them on your list. This can be done by doing a search on the news outlet's website. Find reporters who have recently written about sexual assault and be sure to include them on the list of people you send your press release to.
- 4) Include other like-minded organizations that you think would be interested in your event. Include local church groups, community members, or businesses to advertise your event to. Think outside of the box.
- 5) Once you've sent out your press release to your list of contacts, follow-up with them (preferably with a phone call) a day or two before the event to make sure they received the news release. Ask them if they are attending. Start building your relationship with this person. Even if they don't cover your event this time, they might the next time.
- 6) Don't be afraid to ask for help. IowaCASA staff is available to help you navigate the media. Contact Matty Smith at communications@iowacasa.org if you have questions or concerns about connecting with the media.



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Sample SAAM #Parents4Prevention Campaign Plan

Before April:

- Recruit a group of parents to participate in your local #Parents4Prevention campaign
- Prep and assemble all your social media files
- Notify local parent groups of your campaign and ask for their support

April 1:

- Announce the start of SAAM on your social media campaign
- Remind all the parents to do the same
- Change your social media profile pictures to include the #SAAM2016 filter. Download the filter at: <http://twibbon.com/Support/saam-2016>
- Send your press release to local media outlets announcing the #Parents4Prevention campaign with a list of upcoming events

April 4-8: Day Care without the Scare

- Reach out to online parents' forums and in-person parents' groups to publicize the tips on evaluating child care professionals
- Post one or two sample questions on your social media accounts

April 11-15: Organizing Community Forums

- Assemble a team of parents and community members to plan local community forums
- Reach out to PTAs, school groups, and faith groups

April 18-22: Interrupting Online Harassment

- Post links on social media

April 25-29: Empowering Questions to Ask When Visiting a College Campus

- Post college-themed social media posts (i.e. Three Miles Lost performance of "Til It Happens to You")

After April:

- Follow up on everything, thank your participants for their support
- Host more community forums throughout the year

