Dear Workplaces Respond Partners:

The National Resource Center: Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence (Workplaces Respond) is pleased to share with you this 2024 Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) Toolkit. Using the Four Rs of Trauma Responsiveness, this toolkit helps users better Realize the prevalence of sexual assault among workers, Recognize the impacts of sexual assault, Respond with compassion and resources, and Resist (re)traumatization through educating oneself and others. Please consider sharing this toolkit with your networks.

This toolkit includes resources to enhance your workplace’s capacity to better serve survivors and prevent and respond to sexual assault impacting workers and the workplace:

- An infographic that provides prevalence statistics;
- How to recognize the impacts of sexual violence on workers and the workplace;
- Links to resources, tips, model policies and trainings, and videos; and,
- Information on national actions and engagements.

Workplaces Respond is available to provide free technical assistance to support development and implementation of supportive responses to assist survivors of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Please use this link to submit requests for assistance.

With gratitude,
Workplaces Respond
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About Sexual Assault Awareness Month

While it wasn’t until 2001 that Sexual Assault Awareness Month was declared a national awareness month, and even longer before it was declared such at the presidential level, sexual assault awareness and prevention efforts have existed for much longer.

Sexual assault has been used as a means of power and control over another person for much of human history. In the United States, we also must come to terms with the legacy that our country was built through the rape and labor of enslaved peoples. To capture the full history and nuance of the sexual violence awareness and prevention movement into a short timeline would be impossible. The below is intended to provide the roots of the movement as it now exists and a contemporary history.

Civil Rights Era (1950s/60s)
Many of the women of color, and particularly Black women, who provided their labor to the Civil Rights Movement worked at the intersection of race- and gender-based violence. Long before Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality,” these women, including Rosa Parks, were integral to seeding the movement to protect survivors of and prevent sexual violence.

Second Wave Feminism and the Women’s Rights Movement (1960s/70s)
Often cited as the beginning of the anti-violence movement, this wave of the Women’s Rights Movement, saw a great deal of activation and organization at a national level for the rights of women inside and outside of the home. Of particular focus was the domestic and sexual violence that a woman may experience and how communities could respond to and support these survivors.

1971 – First Rape Crisis Center Founded in San Francisco
Bay Area Women Against Rape has been serving survivors since. Over the next five years, 400 centers opened throughout the United States.

1978 – Inaugural “Take Back the Night” Event
As a response to incidents of violence against women, this movement, still present today, became a rallying cry for women who wanted to organize for safety in their communities.

1984 – Victims of Crime Act
VOCA establishes funding to provide services and compensation to victims of a variety of crimes, including sexual assault.
1991 – Anita Hill Testifies
Anita Hill bravely testified at the Supreme Court confirmation hearing of Clarence Thomas. Her testimony, about the sexual harassment she experienced at the hands of Thomas during her time at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, sparked broader conversations about sexual violence and sexual harassment.7

1994 – Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
This 1994 bill was the first designed to end violence against women. VAWA addresses domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It established the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) within the Department of Justice. Funding for prevention and survivor resources are administered through OVW.8

2000 – National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) Established
NSVRC is a project of the Center for Disease Control and Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

2000 – VAWA Reauthorization
This reauthorization supported the creation of legal assistance programs and reinforced the roles of state coalitions.9

April 2001 – First SAAM Campaign
NSVRC leads the first national SAAM campaign. This campaign cements the decision to use teal as the color for the month and the teal ribbon becomes a symbol for awareness and prevention.10

2005 – VAWA Reauthorization
This reauthorization created an additional focus on underserved and marginalized populations, created Federal funding for sexual assault services programs and rape crisis centers, and reinforced existing structures.

2009 – Presidential Proclamation of National SAAM
This was the first proclamation of SAAM from the executive branch of government.11

2011 – “Dear Colleague” Letter
This letter defined sexual assault and harassment that occurred on college campuses as a form of sex discrimination and a violation of Title IX – a civil rights protection that prohibits sex discrimination within education programs.12
2013 – VAWA Reauthorization
This reauthorization increases funding and prosecution rights to Native Americans, specifically on tribal reservations; increases protections for immigrant survivors, and adds provisions to protect LGBT survivors from discrimination.\(^{13}\)

2014 – White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault Established
In addition to the 2011 Dear Colleague letter, the task force aimed at providing evidence-based prevention and response guidance, best practices, and programs; increasing coordination between victim service agencies and universities to best serve students; and bolstering mechanisms for federal enforcement and oversight.\(^{14}\) These efforts were mirrored in the national SAAM campaign during this year.\(^{15}\)

2017 – #MeToo Movement
“Me too” was a phrase activist Tarana Burke used to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence, particularly effecting Black women and girls. It wasn't until a decade later that actress Alyssa Milano tweeted out #MeToo, inviting survivors to share as little or as much of their stories as they wanted, that the phrase sparked a movement. The movement saw prominent figures in media, and some beyond, face multiple allegations. Additionally, the movement saw new legislation enacted at the state level, company policies refocused and revised, and a broader conversation around sexual harassment and assault.\(^{16}\)

2018 – Dr. Christine Blasey Ford Testifies
During the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh, Dr. Ford provided testimony that detailed her attempted sexual assault at the hands of Justice Kavanaugh and a friend when they were in high school. She used her knowledge and expertise as a psychology professor to describe her experience and memories to the Senate Judiciary Committee. While Justice Kavanaugh was eventually confirmed, Dr. Ford was not only a symbol of resilience, but she also gave language to survivors who could not understand why their memories of their own assaults were fragmented and easy to discount.\(^{17}\)

April 2020 – The First Completely Virtual SAAM
As the nation went into various states of lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the national SAAM campaign and supporting materials quickly pivoted to a virtual campaign.\(^{18}\)
June 2020 – The Murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement
In response to the nation witnessing the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, the violence prevention and response field began necessary conversations around diversity within the movement, the connections of various systemic oppressions and gender-based violence and harassment; alternative options for survivors outside of the criminal justice system; and how to better support survivors who are part of underserved and marginalized communities.

2022 – VAWA Reauthorization
This reauthorization expanded funding, tribal jurisdiction, and survivor options; increased services and support to underserved and marginalized communities; aimed to address technology-facilitated abuse and harassment; provided additional funding focused on prevention initiatives; and addressed the connection of firearms and domestic violence.

April 2024
This year, you have the opportunity to create awareness within your workplace throughout the month of April. The theme for national SAAM is Building Connected Communities. Find out more about the theme and SAAM through the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.
Raising Awareness Beyond SAAM

**Awareness, prevention, and response** are all necessary components to addressing gender-based violence and harassment within your workplace.

- **Awareness** teaches people that a problem exists, the scope of that problem, and what the problem looks like in everyday life.
  
  Examples of awareness strategies are hanging a poster with prevalence data and available resources, and social media campaigns sharing personal stories.

- **Primary prevention** aims to address the root causes of violence, decrease risk factors, and increase protective factors at individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Primary prevention stops violence before it starts.
  
  Examples of primary prevention include multiple training opportunities in a variety of formats that address the root causes of violence; policies and programs focused on eliminating barriers to access safer employment, housing, and education; programs that highlight pro-social behaviors and culture change; and opportunities for people to explore how power works within their organizations and their relationships.

- **Response** involves the support systems and structures put in place in the event that a survivor needs assistance and support. Response ensures that we are mitigating immediate harms and minimizing long-term impacts. An effective response is also referred to as secondary and/or tertiary prevention.
  
  Examples of response include comprehensive policies that provide clear expectations and pathways for support and workplace accommodations; policies and practices that hold people causing harm accountable and provide supports to transform their behavior; onboarding training that provides universal education about the policies and various resources available; and partnering with local victim service agencies to provide confidential supportive services outside of available employer resources.
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Realize: Prevalence

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault is sexual activity such as forced sexual intercourse, sodomy, molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. It includes sexual acts against people who are unable to consent either due to age or lack of capacity.

Studies have shown that sexual harassment can often act as a precursor to sexual assault. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Sexual harassment refers to both unwelcome sexual advances, or other visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature and actions that create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment based on an employee's sex. The offensive conduct need not be motivated by sexual desire, but may be based upon an employee’s actual or perceived sex or gender-identity, actual or perceived sexual orientation, and/or pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser, and actions that subject co-workers to a hostile work environment. Grasping the prevalence of sexual harassment allows us to begin to understand how our culture is often primed to accept subtle and damaging scenarios that can have significant impacts on a survivor and workplace culture.

Throughout the toolkit, you will likely see references to sexual violence: an umbrella term that includes sexual assault, abuse, and harassment. This umbrella term is used in many settings to address the relationship between sexual assault and sexual harassment. Below, you’ll see a continuum from a supportive and safer workplace to one that normalizes and supports sexual violence.

| Supportive, safer, respectful workplace | normalized attitudes and behaviors that uphold and permit negative stereotypes | Sexual harassment and degradation | Rape, sexual assault |

Remember: while these behaviors can exist on a continuum, it does not mean that violence will unfold in a specific manner nor does it mean that the trauma experienced by a survivor should be compared with the trauma experienced by another survivor.
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Realize: Prevalence

1 in 4 women and 1 in 26 men report completed or attempted rape victimization at some point in their lifetime. 

Almost half of transgender individuals report sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.

~1 million women have experienced rape at the hands of a workplace-related perpetrator.

3.5% of women & 1.2% of men reported unwanted sexual contact from a workplace-related perpetrator.

3.9% of women & 2% of men reported sexual violence, including sexual harassment, by a non-authority figure in the workplace.

2.1% of women & .6% of men reported sexual violence, including sexual harassment, by an authority figure in the workplace.
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Realize: Prevalence

23% of women reported experiencing sexual assault in the workplace

9% of men reported experiencing sexual assault in the workplace

97% of those who experienced sexual assault in the workplace, reported that they had experienced sexual harassment prior to the assault

1 in 7 women and 1 in 17 men sought a new job assignment, changed jobs, or quit a job due to the abuse they were experiencing in the workplace.

19.4% of female rape victims lost time from work due to their victimization

9.7% of male rape victims

General population prevalence data can provide an overview of sexual violence in the United States, but there are also industry-specific risk factors that can contribute to higher prevalence of sexual violence within those industries. Risk factors include, but are not limited to, workplaces:

- where job security depends on customer service or client satisfaction;
- where workers are working in an isolated context;
- that uphold “high-value” employees or significant power differences; and
- where bullying and disrespect are prevalent.

Learn more about workplace risk and protective factors here.

The below document the percentage of workers who reported experiencing some form of workplace sexual harassment and the high-risk industry they are in:

58% hotel workers

77% casino workers

30% women in construction trades

60% restaurant workers

80% Mexican immigrant women farmworkers

63% workers in the entertainment industry

Women in the General population have been found to experience workplace sexual harassment at a higher rate than men.
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Recognize: Impacts

No one toolkit or list can capture the range of impacts that sexual assault can have on a survivor; in and outside the workplace. However, listed below are behaviors that you, as a coworker or supervisor, may identify. Recognizing these behaviors and impacts can provide an opportunity to check in with someone and provide appropriate resources, if needed.

**Inability to concentrate**

Trauma and fear caused by sexual assault can trigger a constant state of flight or fight which can diminish cognitive functioning.\(^{39}\)

**Increased absenteeism**

On average, survivors of sexual assault lose 8.1 days a year to seek medical attention, resources, and safety.\(^{40}\)

**Fear, depression, anxiety, agitation, hypervigilance**

Trauma, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – all common among survivors of gender-based violence – can result in survivors displaying a range of emotions that may appear to be inappropriate or extreme.\(^{41}\)

**Decreased productivity or engagement**

Once confident employees may suddenly become timid or second guess themselves due to psychological abuse; or individuals experiencing abuse may withdraw from activities and engagement with coworkers that they used to enjoy.\(^{42}\)
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Recognize: Impacts

These physical, emotional, and mental health impacts can manifest themselves among employees in a variety of ways.

**Emotional**
- Numbness, apathy, withdrawal
- Anxiety and fear
- Guilt and shame
- Anger and irritability
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts

**Physical**
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Headaches
- Sleep problems
- Chronic pain
- Panic attacks

**Cognitive**
- Difficulty focusing or making decisions
- Flashbacks
- Hypervigilance
- Decreased working memory

**Identifying trauma responses**

Being able to recognize different trauma responses can be another way to identify when a worker might need support or resources.

**Fight**
- Confronting an actual or perceived threat aggressively

**Flight**
- Running from an actual or perceived threat

**Freeze**
- Being unable to move or act against an actual or perceived threat

**Fawn/Appease**
- Complying with a threat as a means of protection against further harm

How might these responses show up in the workplace for a survivor?
Workplaces Respond Resources
These resources from the National Resource Center, funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, will help you learn more about sexual assault, supporting survivors within your workplace, and creating policies and structures within your workplace to prevent and respond to sexual assault.

- **Addressing the Impacts of Violence and Trauma in the Workplace: Promoting Worker Wellness and Resilience through Trauma-Informed Practice**
  - This white paper provides information about promoting worker wellness and resilience through trauma-informed practice.

- **Employer Guide to Safety Planning**
  - This guide provides information on different types of safety plans with a focus on workplace-related aspects.

- **Employer Policy to Prevent & Respond to Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**
  - This model policy aims to standardize survivor-centered and trauma-informed protocols that respond to employees experiencing domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking and advise employees of preventive and supportive resources.

- **Model Training on Preventing & Responding to DVSAS: Implementing Supportive Workplace Policies & Practices**
  - This training describes how domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking impacts the workplace, how workers can support survivors, and how workplaces can implement domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking policies.

- **Video: Supervisors Can Make a Difference**
  - This 20-minute training video, based on real-world experiences, demonstrates supportive and practical responses by supervisors to employees who experience domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking. These practices can help keep everyone in the workplace safe and productive.

- **Video: Responding to Gender-Based Violence & Harassment in a Virtual Setting**
This video and accompanying discussion guide introduce ways in which workplaces and employers can better respond to and prevent domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking in virtual workplace settings.

Learn More
These websites provide more information about sexual assault; information, tools, and resources for survivors; and resources that may be used to strengthen awareness, prevention, and response programs.

- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center** (NSVRC)
  - NSVRC provides research & tools to advocates working on the frontlines to end sexual harassment, assault, and abuse with the understanding that ending sexual violence also means ending racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression.
    - **Respect Together Campus**
      - This joint effort between the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR) and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) aims to provide a variety of eLearning modules to educate and support you in your efforts to prevent and respond to sexual Violence.

- **RALIANCE**
  - RALIANCE is a national partnership dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation. RALIANCE partners with a wide range of organizations to improve their cultures and create environments free from sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse. Every day, RALIANCE helps leaders establish safe workplaces and strong communities by advancing research, influencing policy, and supporting innovative programs. RALIANCE is based in Washington, DC and combines decades of experience and resources from three leading national sexual violence prevention organizations into a single, unified force.

- **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)**
  - RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the
country. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

- **ValorUS**
  - ValorUS® (VALOR) is a California-based, national organization and California’s sexual assault coalition committed to advancing equity and ending sexual violence. Since our founding in 1980, we have continued to build dynamic relationships across a diverse range of communities, institutions and systems, and mobilize our network of survivors and advocates to influence change. Through leadership, prevention, and advocacy, we are fearlessly pursuing a world free from violence where the dignity of every person is valued and respected.
    - **The Hub: ValorUS’ Online Resource Center**
      - The Hub is VALOR’s online resource center where its online courses, archives of web conferences, resources, and documents are available. The Hub is available to VALOR members and technical assistance recipients. For more information about the Hub, please click on Contact.
    - **PreventConnect**
      - PreventConnect is a national project of ValorUS, formerly CALCASA, with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and RALIANCE. The goal of PreventConnect is to advance the primary prevention of sexual assault and relationship violence by building a community of practice among people who are engaged in such efforts. PreventConnect also builds the capacity of local, state, territorial, national and tribal agencies and organizations to develop, implement and evaluate effective prevention initiatives.

- **Fast Facts: Preventing Sexual Violence**
  - This resource from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides an in-depth description of sexual violence in addition to tips for prevention.
After a Sexual Assault
Direct survivors to this resource if they are unsure what to do after experiencing sexual assault.

- **Steps You Can Take After a Sexual Assault**
  - This webpage provides a variety of steps and options for a survivor after they experience sexual assault.

**Helplines**
Refer to these helplines and hotlines if you or somebody you know has experienced sexual assault.

- **Victim Connect Resource Center**
  - Available Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. EST via phone, chat, or text.
  - 1-855-4VICTIM (855-484-2846)

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
  - Available 24/7 via call, chat, and text.
  - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
  - TTY: 1-800-787-3224
  - Text “START” to 88788

- **National Sexual Assault Hotline**
  - Available 24/7, callers will be connected with a trained sexual assault advocate in their area. Also available via chat on the website.
  - 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

- **The Deaf Hotline**
  - Available 24/7 via phone and email.
  - 1-855-812-1001

- **Love Is Respect**
  - Available 24/7 via call, chat, and text for youth experiencing teen dating violence.
  - 1-800-331-9474
  - TTY: 1-800-787-3224
  - Text “LOVEIS” to 22522

- **Strong Hearts Native Helpline**
  - 24/7 safe, confidential and anonymous domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives
  - 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Resist (Re)traumatization: Tools

Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Sexual assault, as well as other forms of gender-based violence and harassment, can have short- and long-term effects, one of which is trauma. Trauma is defined as “an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

Using a trauma-informed approach to workplace prevention and response of gender-based violence and harassment will help survivors who are employees in your workplace feel safe using resources and sharing their experience. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) introduced the following six principles in SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach.

Below are short summaries of the six principles.

- **Safety**: People feel physically and psychologically safe in their environments.
- **Trustworthiness and Transparency**: Operations and decisions are transparent and strive to build trust within the workplace and with external partners, including clients.
- **Peer Support**: The workplace learns from workers, especially workers who are survivors, to discover what will work and how they can contribute to workplace safety and respect.
- **Collaboration and Mutuality**: Where possible, practice power-sharing to achieve a collaborative and mutually respectful workplace.
- **Empowerment, Voice, and Choice**: The workplace and decision-makers trust that survivors know what is best for them and work to give them opportunities to recover as they need.
- **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues**: The workplace and its decision-makers understand the complexity of identity as the identities a survivor holds can impact their risk and protective factors as well as access and barriers to supportive services. Additionally, they understand how historical and intergenerational trauma can compound the trauma survivors experience. A trauma-informed workplace tries to eliminate barriers and provide equitable access to resources.
Thursday, April 18, 2024: Day of Giving
Find your local rape crisis center and donate during this nationwide day of giving.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024: Denim Day
Join millions of people across the world that will wear jeans with a purpose, support survivors, and educate themselves and others about all forms of sexual violence. Find out more here.

#30DaysofSAAM Instagram Challenge 2024
Join advocates, activists, survivors, and supporters who are getting involved in Sexual Assault Awareness Month #SAAM2024 this April on Instagram. Daily prompts encourage creative ways to raise awareness, educate, and connect with others — plus, you have a chance to win prizes every day you participate. Learn more here.
Sources


5 Take Back the Night. (n.d.) International History of TBTN. Retrieved from https://takebackthenight.org/history/


Sources


21 See California’s Civil Rights Department from their definition of sexual harassment: https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/03/Sexual-Harassment-Fact-Sheet_ENG.pdf


