

**SAAM 2011 Campaign**  
**Theme: "It's time ... to get involved."**  
**SAAM Day of Action: Tuesday, April 5, 2011**

Carol Hensell, Program Manager  
Sexual Violence Prevention and Education  
Arizona Department of Health  
Phoenix, AZ  
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## **About the Campaign**

The 2011 Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign, "*It's time ... to get involved,*" examines ways everyone can speak up to prevent sexual violence in neighborhoods, communities, workplaces and schools. The national campaign explores common, everyday behaviors and offers individuals viable, responsible ways to intervene.

Over the years, a greater emphasis has been made on preventing sexual violence before it occurs, otherwise known as PRIMARY PREVENTION. As a result, SAAM campaigns have included a greater focus on prevention. This year's primary prevention approach helps create environments where people feel safe in their relationships, families, neighborhoods, schools, work places and communities. The campaign provides resources and information that anyone can use to address behaviors before sexual violence occurs.

The campaign incorporates a bystander approach (i.e., bystander responsibility) to sexual violence prevention.<sup>1</sup> A bystander is anyone who witnesses a situation but may or may not know what to do, may think others will act, or may be afraid to do something. Research shows that engaging bystanders is a promising way to help prevent the widespread problem of sexual violence in communities. The bystander intervention approach is key to expanding the possibilities to stop sexual violence BEFORE it is perpetrated. This approach has been successfully used to help combat racism, intimate partner violence, and drinking and driving. Programs that promote bystander involvement recognize the importance of shifting existing social norms so that there is social pressure to act or to say something.<sup>2</sup> There are many instances when bystanders may be able to intervene in a number of situations. For instance, bystanders can step in when they hear an inappropriate comment or witness inappropriate and unhealthy behaviors at a party.<sup>3</sup>

## **Why don't we intervene with sexual violence?**

According to Smedley and Syme (2000), "It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior when so many forces in the social, cultural and physical environment conspire against such change."<sup>4</sup> It is also often difficult for people to think about solutions that might

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<sup>1</sup> Current campaign. SAAM 2011 campaign. National sexual violence resource center. Retrieved from Internet on March 3, 2011 from <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/current-campaign>.

<sup>2</sup> Berkowitz, A. (2003). Applications of social norms theory to other health and social justice issues. In H. W. Perkins (Ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians* (pp. 259-279). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>3</sup> Tabachnick, J. (2009). *Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention*. National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Retrieved from Internet on March 1, 2011 from <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/engaging-bystanders-sexual-violence-prevention>.

<sup>4</sup> Wallack, L. (2000). The role of mass media in creating social capital: A new direction for public health. In B. D. Smedley & S. L. Syme (Eds.), *Promoting health: Intervention strategies from social and behavioral research* (pp. 337-365). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

address the roots of the problem.<sup>5</sup> Many people appear to lack an understanding of how sexual violence can be prevented and think that the way to deter would-be perpetrators of sexual violence is through stiffer penalties and prevention of repeat offenses through ongoing detainment.<sup>6</sup> However, penalties and detainment are not examples of primary prevention; they are reactions to a crime or “event” that has already occurred.

### **When to intervene?**

If we limit interventions to the “event,” we have missed the opportunity to do or say something before someone is harmed. We must think of the “event” as being on a continuum of behaviors that demand specific interventions at each step. At one side of the continuum are healthy, age-appropriate, respectful, and safe behaviors. At the other side are sexual abuse, rape, and other violent behaviors. In the middle of the continuum are behaviors that may range from those that start to feel inappropriate to those that are more coercive and harassing. In appropriate comments, harassment, and other forms of abuse may lead to a sexually violent act.<sup>7</sup>

At any point along the continuum, we have opportunities to intervene and reinforce positive behaviors BEFORE a behavior moves towards sexual violence. Instead of being a society of passive bystanders, we must change to a society that is engaged and responsible. Everyone must be a bystander. We must not limit interventions to one individual or to sexual violence prevention and intervention programs across the country. Not only should we teach everyone to be active bystanders, but we must provide education about healthy relationships, sexual harassment, and what are inappropriate sexual behaviors. We need to teach people skills to recognize behaviors that are not acceptable.

In addition, to teaching individuals how to be responsible bystanders, we must help individuals assess situations for danger. It may not always be safe to intervene. In certain circumstances, intervention may require individuals to request help from others, such as other bystanders or professionals. Care must also be taken to ensure the anonymity and privacy of those involved in situations.

In order to create long-term social change, we must not only empower and engage bystanders at the individual level, but also at the community level. We must engage and support bystanders at all levels of the social-ecological model.<sup>8</sup> Engaging bystanders at the community level may involve changing social norms and developing new laws and organizational policies that support healthy relationships and help prevent sexual violence. Our goal is to create and sustain a culture that encourages everyone to speak up, ask questions, and intervene. We want to create policies

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<sup>5</sup> O’Neil, M., & Morgan, P. (2010). *American Perceptions of Sexual Violence. A Frameworks Research Report*. Frameworks Institute. Retrieved from Internet on March 1, 2011 from

[http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF\\_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> O’Neil, M., & Morgan, P. (2010). *American Perceptions of Sexual Violence. A Frameworks Research Report*. Frameworks Institute. Retrieved from Internet on March 1, 2011 from

[http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF\\_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Tabachnick, J. (2009). *Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention*. National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Retrieved from Internet on March 1, 2011 from <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/engaging-bystanders-sexual-violence-prevention>.

<sup>8</sup> Dahlberg LL, Krug EG. (2002). Violence-a global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. *World Report on Violence and Health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization (pp.1–56). Retrieved from Internet on March 1, 2011 from <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>.

that decrease the costs of taking action and increase the incentives to be a responsible bystander. It is the time for all of us to get involved.

### **What can you do to get involved in SAAM in Arizona and throughout the nation?<sup>9</sup>**

The following are ideas about how anyone can get involved with SAAM and be an active bystander. These are adapted from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

- Teach non-violent conflict-resolution skills and promote anti-bullying values that demonstrate respect for everyone.
- Emphasize skill-development, team work, character and sportsmanship over competition in sports and other settings.
- Talk with individuals about normal human development and healthy, consensual sexuality.
- Promote activities that demonstrate appreciation for diversity.
- Recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of each person and speak out about ways to show respect.
- Promote violence-free workplaces; establish and enforce sexual harassment and anti-bullying policies; support programs that are working to make a difference.

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<sup>9</sup> 2011 Campaign Resources. (2011). National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Retrieved from Internet on March 3, 2011 from <http://www.dayoneri.org/FS-PreventionActions.pdf>.