



Talking about sexual violence isn't easy, and it may make you uncomfortable. But let's get one thing clear: Sexual violence is NOT about sex. It's not about what a victim looks like, how they acted, or even how much they had to drink.

Sexual violence is about power and control. Only by holding perpetrators accountable can we end it. Unfortunately, many people buy into harmful stereotypes about sexual violence that only transfer blame from the perpetrator to the victim. Learning the truths about sexual violence can empower you to make a difference in someone else's life – either as an active bystander or supporting a victim of sexual assault.

TRUTHS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence can happen to anyone, anywhere, any time.

People can be victims of sexual violence regardless of age, income, race, or social standing. By the time they turn 18, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be the victim of sexual violence. Although statistically, women are more likely to be victimized, men are also victims. It's also important to be aware that although the majority of perpetrators are men, that doesn't mean the majority of men are perpetrators.

Most people who are raped or sexually assaulted DO NOT report to law enforcement.

One of the most common fears victims have is that no one will believe them. Victims often experience many different emotions that directly impact IF they decide to tell someone about the assault and WHO they decide to tell. It may be through sharing their experience with another person that they decide to report to law enforcement. Victims with past negative experiences with law enforcement or systems response face additional barriers to reporting.

Despite common stereotypes, most acts of sexual violence are committed by someone the victim knows or trusts in a location known to the victim.

Sexual violence is not a crime of lust or uncontrollable sexual urges. It is a crime of power and control. The truth is that anyone can be a perpetrator: family, friends, a dating partner or spouse, or someone you met last weekend. More than 90% of sexual assaults in North Dakota involve someone the victim knows. When the victim is a child, the percentage is more than 95%. Many sexual assaults occur in the home of either the victim or the perpetrator.

Sexual Violence IS Your Business

Sexual violence isn't just a "women's issue" or something people start caring about after someone close to them is directly affected. We must see sexual violence as a human issue – one that hurts victims, their families, friends, and communities. Through increasing awareness, practicing bystander intervention, and calling out victim-blaming attitudes, we can end sexual violence.

RETHINKING RAPE CULTURE: WHAT IS "ENTHUSIASTIC CONSENT"?

Sex is never an obligation – and only YES means YES.
"Wait" means NO.
"Maybe later" means NO.
"Not now" means NO.
"Let's just go to sleep" means NO.
Being asleep or unconscious means NO.
And most importantly, silence means NO.

If you adopt this idea of "enthusiastic consent" and teach it to those around you, soon it will become a shared value.

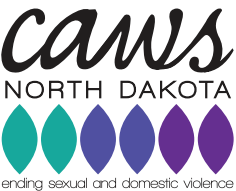
Remember, consent must be

- Informed
- Freely, actively given
- Mutually understandable words or actions

Rape culture: Being surrounded by images, language, laws, and other everyday phenomena that not only allows but justifies sexual violence against women. "Living in a rape culture" means that we are continually exposed to advertising, film, TV, music, and online content that sexualizes and trivializes violence, especially violence toward women and girls. Sexual coercion and control seem so "normal" that people don't view rape as a shared problem to solve, but "just how things are."

Victim blaming: A cornerstone of rape culture, this common tendency relies on society's inclination to find excuses for the perpetrator's behavior, usually by blaming the victim. Through comments about the victim being "dressed like that" or how much they had to drink, attitudes of victim blaming tend to reinforce faulty beliefs, such as most rapes being false accusations or the idea that women's bodies have a way to "shut down" unwanted sexual contact.

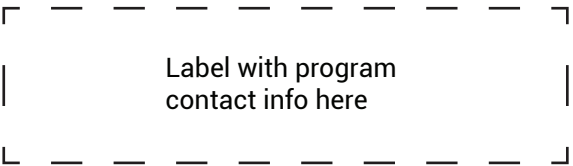
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Understanding Sexual Violence

