Start by Believing: A Public Awareness Campaign to Change the Way We Respond to Sexual Violence in Our Community

Varsha N, JD
Executive Board, Board of Directors
End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI)
Learning Objectives

- Review research on positive and negative reactions to disclosures of sexual assault.
- Discuss the purpose of the *Start by Believing* public awareness campaign.
- Explore materials to launch a local campaign.
- Review preliminary evidence for impact.
REACTIONS TO DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE
Informal and Formal Support

- Most victims seek help from friends, family (estimates range from 58-94%)

- Some access formal support services
  - Few (5-20%) report to law enforcement
  - Less than half seek medical care or obtain a medical forensic exam (estimated 27-40%)
  - Some use mental health services (16-60%)
Benefit of Formal Support

Research documents benefits of formal support on victim recovery, well-being

- Health Care / Forensic Medicine
- Victim Advocacy
- Counseling / Therapy / Support Groups
Benefit of Formal Support

Accessing services of one professional increases likelihood of engaging others
Benefit of Informal Support

- Documented benefits from support of family, friends, and intimate partners
  - Emotional Support
  - Information
  - Help with Tangible Needs

- Social support increases access of other formal resources – and is the key to engaging the criminal justice system and remaining engaged throughout process
Benefit of Support

Survivors contacted an average of 2-3 informal or formal supports before reporting to law enforcement.

Risk of Disclosure

- Benefits only if:
  - Victims disclose to formal or informal support providers AND
  - These individuals respond in positive ways

- Both steps are fraught with risk
"I'm not a gynecologist, but I can tell you something: If someone doesn't want to have sexual intercourse, the body shuts down. The body will not permit that to happen unless a lot of damage is inflicted, and we heard nothing about that in this case."

- California judge, publicly admonished by the California Commission on Judicial Performance
Impact of Negative Reactions

- If reaction is negative, this creates an additional, measurable negative impact
  - Post traumatic stress
  - Delayed recovery
  - Poorer health

- Over and above the trauma of the sexual assault
Impact of Negative Reactions

• Inverse relationship:
  ◦ More negative reactions, emotional and physical health of victims deteriorates

• Self-blame is particularly destructive, and can be fueled by negative social reactions
  ◦ Level of emotional distress among victims determined in large part by self-blame
Impact of Negative Reactions

“Victims may be better off receiving no support at all than receiving reactions they consider to be hurtful.”

Positive Reactions

- What does positive support look like?
- Victims in one study described:
  - Receiving emotional support
  - Being listened to
  - Not being blamed
  - Encouraged to talk about the sexual assault
  - Not being distracted with other things

Positive Reactions

- Key is:
  (1) Being believed, and
  (2) Having someone to talk to

-Victims with such a response have fewer physical and psychological symptoms

Role of Informal Support

- Informal support providers play absolutely critical role in victim recovery
  - But they are typically unprepared for it
  - Need strategies to prepare and assist them
PREPARING SUPPORT PEOPLE TO RESPOND
Start by Believing Campaign

- Public awareness campaign developed by End Violence Against Women International
  - Designed to prepare friends, family members, and professionals to respond positively to a disclosure of sexual assault victimization
  - Developed in partnership with a marketing firm, FSA Management Group
  - Launched in April 2011 during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, at EVAWI’s annual conference
“My daughter died in a car crash.”

“Well that’s what she gets for not taking the bus.”

YOUR REACTION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

START BY believing
startbybelieving.org
Start by Believing Campaign

Materials created for dissemination

- Print materials (brochures, posters, postcards)
- Promotional items (mugs, t-shirts, bracelets)
- Spanish and English language materials
- Website (www.startbybelieving.org)
- Video presentation (PPT slideshow, YouTube)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
When someone comes to you... what will your reaction be?

**NEW!** Download our free multimedia slideshow presentation to introduce the *Start by Believing* campaign in your community. Visit our [Materials](#) page today...

**iNueval** Descargar gratis Empieza por Creer cartel/sfiche y una tarjeta postal para tu comunidad. Visite nuestra página de [materiales](#) hoy...

There is no shame when your loved one dies. When your car is stolen. When you’re diagnosed with cancer. Friends and loved ones gather around you for support. They don’t blame you for “bringing it on yourself.”

It should be the same with sexual violence. But all too often, survivors who have the courage to tell someone what happened are blamed for bringing it on themselves. This needs to change.

*Start by Believing* is a public awareness campaign designed to change the way we respond to rape and sexual assault in our communities.

*Won’t you join us?* [Click here to get involved...](#)
My name is Matt. I am a firefighter. When someone tells me they were raped or sexually assaulted, I Start by Believing.

My name is Kerry. I am a sexual assault nurse examiner, a mom, a wife, daughter and sister. When someone tells me they were raped or sexually assaulted, I Start by Believing.
“Mi hija murió en un accidente de automóvil.”

“Pues eso es lo que le pasa por no tomar el autobús.”

“Your reaction makes the difference.”

“Your reaction makes the difference.”

"Well that's what she gets for not taking the bus."
PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE FOR IMPACT
Hospital Callouts Increased
To the highest level in 5 years, then declined when billboards were removed

Data source: Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA)
Police Reports Increased

Reports of rape and forcible sodomy went up, when national reporting was down

Data source: Kansas City Police Department

End Violence Against Women International
Medical Forensic Exams Increased

Emergency summit in July 2011 to address the “unprecedented increase in the demand for services,” stakeholder interviews conducted.

Data source: Forensic Assessment Consultation and Treatment (FACT) Program

End Violence Against Women International
Emergency Summit Findings

Multiple factors at play:

- Economic downturn
- Added new forensic examiner programs
- Outreach from MOCSA and examiners
- Several high profile cases
- Media interviews
- Increased public awareness
- Increase in cases with drugs / alcohol
- Better ways to track and document

Source: Sexual Assault Emergency Summit hosted by MOCSA (November 17, 2011). By Dr. Ronda Jensen and Arden Day, University of Missouri Kansas City Institute for Human Development. Also personal communication with Melanie Austin, Program Services Coordinator for MOCSA (December 2012).
Impact of *Start by Believing*?

- Certainly role of multiple factors
- No planned outcome evaluation
- Yet timing is extremely coincidental
San Luis Obispo, California

Non-scientific email survey:

- Seen the campaign logo or message?
- Where? (billboard, newspaper, radio, friend)
- What they thought the message meant
- Why they thought message was promoted
- How they felt about the campaign
- Talked about the campaign with someone?
Non-Scientific Email Survey

Not representative sample, but relatively diverse by gender, age, employer, etc.

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<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement Agency / Prosecutor’s Office</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
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<td>Cal Poly Faculty / Staff</td>
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End Violence Against Women International
Email Survey Findings

• Of 227 respondents, almost 2/3 had seen the campaign message or logo
  ◦ Most common were Facebook, billboard, personal contact, or campus
  ◦ Seemed to understand and support the message, recognize why it was promoted

• About 2/3 discussed it with someone
Email Survey Respondent

“I was highly shocked when I first saw the billboard, but I know that it is something that should be discussed with everyone in the community. As someone who has been sexually assaulted, it is important for me that other people hear me and support me, and hopefully someone can come to me when they need help and support.”
Reports to Police Increased

Speaking out: The number of reported sexual assaults in SLO increased dramatically in 2013

BY COLIN RIGLEY

On March 29, 2013, a woman called the SLO Police Department to report that she had just been raped, and the suspect was still in her house. Three weeks earlier, another victim reported that a sexual assault had just occurred. In July, a woman called to report that a man had made sexual remarks to her son, and the day after Christmas a man was arrested for allegedly reaching up a victim’s shirt and exposing himself.

These were just a few of the 14 sexual assault cases that resulted in an arrest, and a fraction of the 85 reports made to the department in 2013, which was the largest increase of such reports in five years.

Between 2009 and 2012, the number of reported sexual assaults in the city averaged about 60 per year, including such crimes as rape, attempted rape, and fondling. But last year, the number of reports increased to 85. That equates to a 41.6 percent increase over the previous four-year average, and a 46.5 percent increase over the reports made in 2012. Additionally, there were 27 reported rapes in 2013, but only 16 reported in 2012.

Yet the sudden surge in reported cases is probably not a sign of a more disturbing increase in sex crimes; rather, it’s more likely the first sign of a positive trend.

“When we see any jump in actual numbers with law enforcement reports, our belief is that there’s not been an increase in sexual assaults—there’s been an increase in reporting,” said Jennifer Adams, executive director of Respect Inspire Support Empower (RISE), formerly the Sexual Assault Recovery and Prevention Center.

Source: New Times, San Luis Obispo, California, February, 12, 2014
Resources Available

- EVAWI offers a wealth of resources to improve criminal justice and community responses to sexual assault.
Vision Statement:
We envision a world where gender-based violence is unacceptable; where perpetrators are held accountable, and victims receive the compassion, support, and justice they deserve.

Technical Assistance:
With support from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), EVAWI is now able to provide technical assistance in two specific areas:

- The law enforcement response to sexual assault,
- and

Start by Believing is a public awareness campaign uniquely focused on the public response to sexual assault. The goal is to change
OnLine Training Institute

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI)

My Account

Welcome to the OnLine Training Institute! Below you will find a list of courses that are currently available (you may need to scroll down to see them).

- Because you now have an account, you can begin immediately by enrolling in any of the modules.

To view a detailed description of any training module, click on the title in the list below. For information on tracking your status in courses, please see the How to Enroll page.

Courses (click on a course name for a full description)

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Conferences

2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, Louisiana
April 7-9, 2015
In this final installment of our series of training bullelins on *Understanding DNA Evidence*, we would like to continue our application of Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) and the SARA model (Scanning - Analysis - Response - Assessment) to the problems associated with unanalyzed forensic evidence in sexual assault cases. We offer additional recommendations for practice - not only for law enforcement agencies, but also for the many other multidisciplinary professionals involved in the criminal justice and community response system for sexual assault. Our objective is to contribute to the ongoing scanning and analysis of this complex problem, as well as the development of alternative responses and an assessment of their impact. The larger goal is to reduce the funnel of attrition for sexual assault cases within the criminal justice system and improve our responses to victims.

Of 100 rapes committed
an estimated 5-20 are reported to police
0.4-5.4 are prosecuted
0.2-5.2 result in a conviction
Incarceration of 0.2-0.8

Graph reprinted from Lonsway and Archambault (2012)
For over 10 years, EVAWI has produced training materials and other resources, as well as collecting materials from across the country and around the world – to help professionals improve the criminal justice and community response to violence against women.

In this section, you will find a wealth of resources for professionals to guide improvements in the criminal justice and community response to violence against women. This includes sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. The goal is to highlight examples of communities striving to achieve the highest standards of victim-centered care and offender accountability. In other words, we are working toward our shared vision of creating a world where gender-based violence is unacceptable; where perpetrators are held accountable, and victims receive the compassion, support, and justice they deserve.

Here you will find detailed answers to many Frequently Asked Questions regarding the criminal justice and community response to violence against women. This includes sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. Questions address topics such as victim dynamics, role of victim advocates, joint interviews, medical forensic exams, law enforcement investigation, victim interviews, and prosecution.

Our most recent webinar was offered by EVAWI’s Executive Director Joanne Archambault and Board President Roger Canaff, on the complex and challenging topic of Victim Interviewing. Other topics included in the Webinar Archive include Forensic Compliance, Medical Mandated Reporting, and Alternative Reporting Methods. Stay tuned for information on upcoming webinars offered by leading professionals in the field, on topics of interest to a broad range of multidisciplinary professionals.