



BELIEVE SURVIVORS

CHANGE THE CULTURE

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

APRIL 2017

**Kent County Sexual Assault Prevention Action Team
Annual Newsletter**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE UNDERMINES THE VALUES OF STRONG COMMUNITIES. USE YOUR VOICE TO CHANGE THE CULTURE.

The Sexual Assault Prevention Action Team (SAPAT) is a coalition of Kent County professionals that work in public health, social service, education, sexual assault services, counseling and advocacy, and law enforcement. SAPAT meets on a monthly basis. Each April, SAPAT distributes a newsletter to the community for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM).

#SAAM

We can all use our voices to change the culture to prevent sexual violence. Prevention requires addressing the root causes and social norms that allow sexual violence to exist.

This April, we're calling on groups whose influence can play a critical role in changing the culture, such as parents, faith communities, members of Greek life, and more. We're strongest when we raise our voices together, and that's why we're engaging new groups in the movement.

These groups can join us in helping the next generation foster attitudes that promote healthy relationships, equality, and respect. These new voices will have a ripple effect on those that they teach, guide, and influence.

TO UNDERSTAND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION, ONE MUST FIRST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE,

the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, and the climate in which these acts of violence occur. Rape, incest, child sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual contact, exposure, and voyeurism are all considered acts of sexual violence. Unfortunately, these acts occur more frequently than most would like to believe, and don't often fit with the assumptions most people make about sexual violence.

Based on information taken from victims that have come forward, it is estimated that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will have experienced rape, and nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men have experienced sexual violence victimization other than rape at some point in their lives (Black et al., 2011). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized sexual violence as a significant problem in the United States, and research to identify risk and protective factors as well as evidence-based prevention strategies has been underway for years. One would assume that a threat to public health of this magnitude would be well known to our society and the mainstream media, yet little has been done to shine the light on the extent of this issue.

There are many factors that have led to the recognition of sexual violence as a public health crisis to remain hidden. Society's inclination toward quick fixes and propensity to dismiss more complex, long-term solutions as unnecessary or too costly has definitely played a part in allowing for high rates of sexual violence to continue. The tendency for individuals to accept this as inevitable or the "norm" also contributes to attitudes that condone violence, as well as weak sanctions for perpetrators and a lack of support for victims. The cultural climate surrounding sexual violence in American society is known as rape culture. Rape culture is pervasive, and operates within all aspects of our society; the media, judicial systems, policy arenas and communities all play a part in perpetuating myths and displacing responsibility for perpetration.

Beyond the influence of rape culture, the CDC has identified several risk and protective factors for individuals' likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence. An individual's attitudes regarding violence, sexuality, and gender norms as well as their life experiences and past relationships can influence their likelihood of perpetration (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Research on sexual violence prevention initiatives is limited, but has so far concluded that reducing rates of sexual violence is going to take a systems wide approach. This includes taking a hard look at the aspects of our society that further rape culture and challenging many of the assumptions people hold about sexual violence.

Looking toward the future, it is promising to know that sexual violence can be prevented. Promoting safe behaviors, thoughtful policies, and healthy relationships is something everyone can do. Prevention is everyone's responsibility. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center has developed a list of concrete ways individuals and communities can begin to address sexual violence (2016):

Individuals

- Intervene to stop problematic and disrespectful behavior
- Promote and model healthy attitudes, behaviors, and relationships
- Believe survivors and assist them in finding resources

Communities

- Create and strengthen policies to promote safety, equality, and respect
- Promote respectful behaviors through education and support for youth
- Provide support and resources for survivors
- Hold perpetrators of violence accountable and ensure that appropriate treatment options are available

The prevention of sexual violence is a process. Because the attitudes, behaviors, and policies that set the stage for sexual violence to take place have become so deeply engrained in our society, it will take a sincere commitment to providing efforts and resources to reshaping structures of violence and oppression that have long been in place. The future is optimistic, but also dependent on individuals coming together to change a culture that is not easily changed. Learn about the initiatives happening in your community. Believe survivors. Change the culture.

References

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). Sexual violence: Risk and protective factors. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>
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FOR DADS: TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEXUAL AND DATING VIOLENCE

BY AARON M. TOFFOLI,
DADS COUNT! COALITION

Many fathers have had the dreaded, awkward “sex talk” with their kids, but few of us feel comfortable talking openly and confidently about dating and sexual abuse. Because of this and a host of other reasons, us dads are less likely to talk about the topic than moms are. However, evidence shows that you may be just the person they need to hear it from most. Both sons and daughters benefit from hearing this information from their dads, or a trusted, involved father figure in their lives. Talk with your child’s mother to make sure that you are on the same page on this subject.

For younger children

- **Teach about private body parts early** - Use the actual names of body parts, not “cute” names. This helps eliminate confusion about their body. Private parts are those covered by a swimsuit. Only their parents and doctor should see private parts when they are helping clean their body or helping them be healthy.
- **Model healthy body boundaries** - Let kids know that they are in charge of their bodies. Don't force them to hug or kiss relatives if they do not want to. Show them how to say “no” and let them know that it will be respected. Tell them that it is not okay for anyone to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. These body boundaries apply to adults as well as other children.
- **Be open** - Start now! Talking openly and directly about sexuality lets kids know they can come to you when they have questions and not be scared to talk to you if they feel their body boundaries are being violated. Teach that body secrets are not okay, and that revealing one would never get them in trouble.
- **You are a role model** - Talk and act the way that you would like your child to act. Children strive to be like us, whether we realize it or not.
- **Teach them appropriate ways to treat others** - Tell them that just as it is not okay when someone harms them or crosses their boundaries, it is not okay to do that to others.

For teens

- **Talk about what healthy relationships are and are not** - We are not born knowing what they look like, so study up and talk about it! Talk about the different forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, etc.).
- **Tell them sex is special** - Sex is not a conquest; It’s not for bragging rights or to make you a man or woman. Tell your teen your thoughts and beliefs on sex (when it should happen, with who, etc.). Think about your own beliefs and make sure they make sense to you before sharing them.
- **Talk about consent** - Consent is when someone freely gives permission for sexual activity. They can change their mind at any time, and having consent once does not guarantee it in the future. Teach that one cannot consent under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Become familiar with the consent laws.
- **Talk with your sons about prevention** - It’s not just up to girls! Every violent relationship or sexual assault has a victim and an abuser. The vast majority of the time the abuser is male. Tell your son it is his job to make sure he doesn’t become the abuser, and to call out his friends if they do something negative.

Helpful resources to help parents learn more:

www.rainn.org

www.stopitnow.org

www.birdsandbeesandkids.com

www.breakthecycle.org

Coaching Boys
INTO MEN

Adults working with youth have the chance to positively impact those young people in so many valuable ways. Using Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) adds the ability to reduce dating and sexual violence in the lives of those who you work with, and in the whole community. The program, developed by Futures Without Violence, takes advantage of the unique relationship that coaches, mentors and leaders have with youth in order to teach themes of respect, integrity and non-violence. These valuable lessons are presented in 11 mini-lessons, which take only 10-15 minutes to complete. The best part: CBIM is evidence-based, which means it’s been proven to work!

The Kent County Health Department Sexual Violence Prevention Program provides trainings and program materials FREE for schools and organizations that serve youth. If your organization is interested in holding a training to learn how to use CBIM, please contact Aaron Toffoli at Aaron.Toffoli@kentcountymi.gov or call (616) 632-7295.



ENGAGING THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

**BY JAZZ MCKINNEY, YWCA WEST
CENTRAL MICHIGAN**

The idea that women can be abusive or that men can be victims of abuse often contradicts the traditional view that only men can be abusers in a relationship. Furthermore, sticking with this heteronormative viewpoint leaves the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) community isolated and especially vulnerable to experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence. Added barriers also make it even harder for LGBTQ survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence to have access to violence prevention resources and services. Limited research available on domestic and/or sexual violence in the LGBTQ community shows that LGBTQ identified individuals experience domestic and/or sexual violence at the same rate, if not more, than non-LGBTQ identified individuals. However, LGBTQ individuals can often face additional challenges such as discrimination by reporting agencies, added harassment, being re-victimized, unintended outing, and a lack of cultural sensitivity that can create hostility, fear, and shame.

It is for these reasons that the YWCA West Central Michigan is working to ensure that all services are offered in a welcoming and inclusive environment for all individuals wishing to access them. As part of the initiative, a specialized therapist, Jazz McKinney, plans to focus outreach efforts on educating and advocating for the LGBTQ community. The YW is further examining its programs to ensure that everyone who walks through the door feels safe, valued, and respected. Individuals experiencing or who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence deserve a safe space for reporting and receiving the services needed to address these issues. As a part of the YW's mission, "peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all" remains a top priority, and this initiative is an important step in supporting our community.

Some questions to get service providers thinking about LGBTQ inclusivity:

- How do we assess our agency?
- How much and in what areas do staff need training on LGBTQ topics?
- What policies do we have/can we put in place to help staff feel safe? Service recipients?
- How can we make our organization a more welcoming environment?
- How can we make sure to use gender-inclusive language?
- Do our services adequately address the specific needs of individuals identifying as LGBTQ?
- How do our outreach and media efforts show support for LGBTQ individuals?

For more information on the YWCA West Central Michigan's LGBTQ services, please contact Jazz McKinney at jmckinney@ywcawcmi.org or 616.459.4681. The 24-hour confidential helpline is also available at 616.454.YWCA (616.454.9922).

GREEKS: IT'S ON US

BY GREEKS AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT, GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Sexual violence has recently become a hot topic of conversation within the college community. It is estimated that 1 in 5 women experienced rape since entering college (CDC, 2012). That being said, sorority women are almost 75% more likely to experience victimization as opposed to their unaffiliated peer, making it very likely that many individuals within these Greek organizations are survivors of sexual assault. Furthermore, it has been statistically shown that fraternity affiliated males are three times more likely to be the perpetrator in a sexual assault, an aspect of Greek life that has created strong associations with sexual assault within their own culture (Minow & Einolf, 2009; Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss, & Weschler, 2004).

Members of Greek life have started to pay closer attention to issue of campus sexual assault, but still have work to do in regards to addressing and preventing it. Greek life provides individuals the unique opportunity of having their voice heard throughout many different networks of colleges and universities. These connections could help to create lasting change. Rather than encouraging rape culture, Greek life membership could be used to spread awareness of issues that allow for unhealthy attitudes toward masculinity, femininity, and sexual conquest, to a culture that promotes accountability and responsibility for issues related to campus sexual assault.

Recognizing the platform given through being a member of Greek life, Grand Valley students passionate about preventing sexual violence began to organize a student organization called Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA). The goal of GASA is to spread education and awareness of campus sexual assault throughout the Grand Valley campus and to promote healthy attitudes toward sexuality, relationships, and college peer life.

GASA has so far participated in events ranging from the It's On Us campaign (promoting awareness and education relating to sexual assault), to the creation of a peer education system, utilized by other Greek organizations. GASA has co-sponsored events with various community organizations dedicated toward spreading sexual assault awareness, and has specifically focused on engaging with marginalized communities. GASA hope to create and maintain open channels of communication as a means of empowering the campus community to give voices to those who are often silenced.

To learn more about GASA and Sexual Assault Awareness Month events, contact Malayna Hasmanis at hasmanim@mail.gvsu.edu.

References

- Minow, J. C., & Einolf, C. J. (2009). Sorority participation and sexual assault risk. *Violence Against Women*, 15(7), 835-851.
- Mohler-Kuo, M., Dowdall, G. W., Koss, M. P., & Wechsler, H. (2004). Correlates of rape while intoxicated in a national sample of college women. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65(1), 37-45.



ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

BY ABBY JOHNSON, YWCA WEST
CENTRAL MICHIGAN



People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often left out of the conversation and research on the topic of sexual assault. National research collapses all violent crime into one category and does not distinguish between types of disabilities, making it difficult to understand the rates and types of sexual violence in the lives of people with disabilities. What we do know is that people with disabilities are twice as likely to be victims of violent crime (National Center for Victims of Crime 2016). Only limited research exists on the abuse of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). One study suggests as many as 83% of women and 32% of men with I/DD will be sexually assaulted within their lifetime (Johnson & Sigler, 2000). It is imperative that all people have access to services that can help prevent these crimes and provide support to victims of abuse. The needs of people with I/DD must be considered in developing such programs.

WEAVE (Working to End Assault and Violence for Everyone) of Kent County is working to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard. WEAVE is a collaboration between the YWCA West Central Michigan and four disability service providers in Kent County- MOKA, Hope Network, Thresholds, and Spectrum Community Services. WEAVE's collaborative projects are designed to improve access to services to victims of sexual violence who have I/DD. Through a Healthy Relationships Curriculum created by the collaboration, participants with I/DD are empowered to recognize unhealthy and healthy relationships and identify sexuality manipulation.

WEAVE is creating a virtual tour video of the Nurse Examiner Program at the YWCA, led by people with I/DD, designed to answer questions and reduce anxiety about using the medical-forensic service. WEAVE is also working to lift up the voices of parents and guardians of people with I/DD, as they serve an important role in identifying sexual assault and connecting their wards to services. In addition to staff from the partner agencies, parents and guardians are participating on the team to create a "Guardian Tool Kit" which will comprise resources designed to support guardians as they support their wards.

WEAVE is one of over 70 community collaborations, funded by the Office on Violence Against Women in the U.S. that are working to end abuse against people with disabilities through building community partnerships. The efforts of these communities are critical in changing our national conversation and ensuring that all people are included in the conversation on ending sexual assault.

Interested in WEAVE resources for your organization? Contact Abby Johnson at ajohnson@ywcawcmi.org or 616-426-3729.

References

National Center for Victims of Crime (2016). "Crimes Against Persons with Disabilities"

https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrvw2016/content/section-6/PDF/2016NCVrw_6_PersonsWithDisabilities-508.pdf

Johnson, I., Sigler R. 2000. "Forced Sexual Intercourse Among Intimates," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 15 (1).

Check out collaborations across the country working to end abuse of people with disabilities and Deaf people: <http://www.endabusepwd.org/>

The WEAVE perspective was created by integrating the philosophical approaches of both services: trauma-informed principles, used by sexual assault providers and the foundations of the Culture of Gentleness, used by disability service providers.



TALKING ABOUT SEX(UAL ASSAULT) IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

**BY DANIELLE LUCKSTED,
SAFE HAVEN MINISTRIES**

Talking about sex—and specifically sexual assault—is an uncomfortable subject in any setting, but that discomfort may be amplified in certain contexts. It is an unfortunate reality that no community is free from domestic or sexual violence, and that certainly applies to faith communities as well. Due to the fear and stigma that so often accompany both subjects, faith communities and faith leaders bear an unfortunate potential to add harm to an already harmful situation, by blaming the victim or ignoring the problem altogether. The flip-side of this, however, is that faith communities also have a unique capability to walk alongside someone who has been victimized by dating or sexual violence. Victims and survivors of abuse very often disclose to members of clergy. This creates a massive responsibility on faith leaders to educate themselves on the dynamics of abuse and best practices to empower the victim and navigate issues of safety.

Faith communities have an incredible capacity to support victims through paying attention to the spiritual needs of a victim, and by focusing on the core values of compassion, justice, and healing. The strong sense of community provided can make or break the healing experience of an individual. Too often, victims feel turned away by their faith communities, further isolating them from supportive services.

This can easily be remedied by keeping the door to open to uncomfortable but crucial conversation, inviting in community experts to navigate the issues of sexual and dating violence within the context of faith, equipping faith leaders and community members with language tools and knowledge, and providing additional resources to fuel that ongoing connection.

Safe Haven's Prevention and Education staff regularly navigates these challenging conversations, and the results are absolutely encouraging.

It becomes a simple matter of keeping our hearts open to the cause, and to our shared mission of providing a foundation of support not only for victims, but also to plant seeds of prevention in our communities by talking about healthy relationships, boundaries, and respect with youth and adults alike.

WORKING WITH BUSINESSES

BY DANIELLE LUCKSTED,
SAFE HAVEN MINISTRIES

The subjects of domestic and sexual violence are too often swept under the rug: discussed in hushed voices or not at all. The shame and stigma attached to victimization means that few people come forward to report or seek services in the first place, and that oftentimes when they do, support systems are not well equipped to respond in the most productive or helpful manner.

The issues of domestic violence and sexual assault are multi-faceted. It is no longer sufficient to call them "private matters" that only impact the individuals most directly harmed. Instead, both topics need to be addressed as public health issues, with known ramifications that seep into every level of society. In fact, the economic impacts of domestic violence are massive. Recent estimates include an economic impact of \$6 billion a year and a loss of 8 million days of paid work on the part of victims - the equivalent of 32,000 full time jobs (domesticshelters.org)*. In light of this, it therefore becomes our communal responsibility to address the issues of gender-based violence and to prevent it before it happens in the first place.

In a bid to reduce stigma and to prepare employers for the impact of domestic violence on the workplace, five local organizations came together in February to host a half-day conference addressing issues like employer's legal responsibilities, employee assistance programs, and ways to support a victim of dating or sexual violence at work. Approximately 96 individuals attended the conference, a collaboration between the Center for Women in Transition, Gentex Corporation, Pine Rest, Rhodes McKee PC, and Safe Haven Ministries. The conference was hugely well-received, and highlighted an outstanding need for workplace engagement with the issue of violence prevention, as we know it is better to have steps in place before an emergency occurs, rather than waiting for an emergency to occur and establishing protocol in the aftermath.

*Source:

<https://www.domesticshelters.org/domestic-violence-statistics/economic-impact-of-domestic-violence#.WLYIIPnyvIV>

PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AT THE YWCA

**BY THE YWCA WEST CENTRAL
MICHIGAN, PREVENTION AND
EMPOWERMENT SERVICES**

The YWCA West Central Michigan's programming to prevent sexual violence has undergone many changes throughout the past year and reframed its approach to welcome working with youth of all genders rather than focusing solely on girls' programming. Previously Girls Incorporated, the YWCA has now formed the Prevention and Empowerment Services. Through these services, the YWCA now provides the Kent County community with co-ed healthy relationships education for middle and high school students, empowerment programming for female-identifying youth, trainings on teen dating violence and sexual assault for school administrators, parents, and community members, and policy change initiatives for schools and businesses. If interested in learning more about what these new services have to offer, please contact program director, Mara Furlich, at mfurlich@ywcawcmi.org

Why shift away from girls only programming?

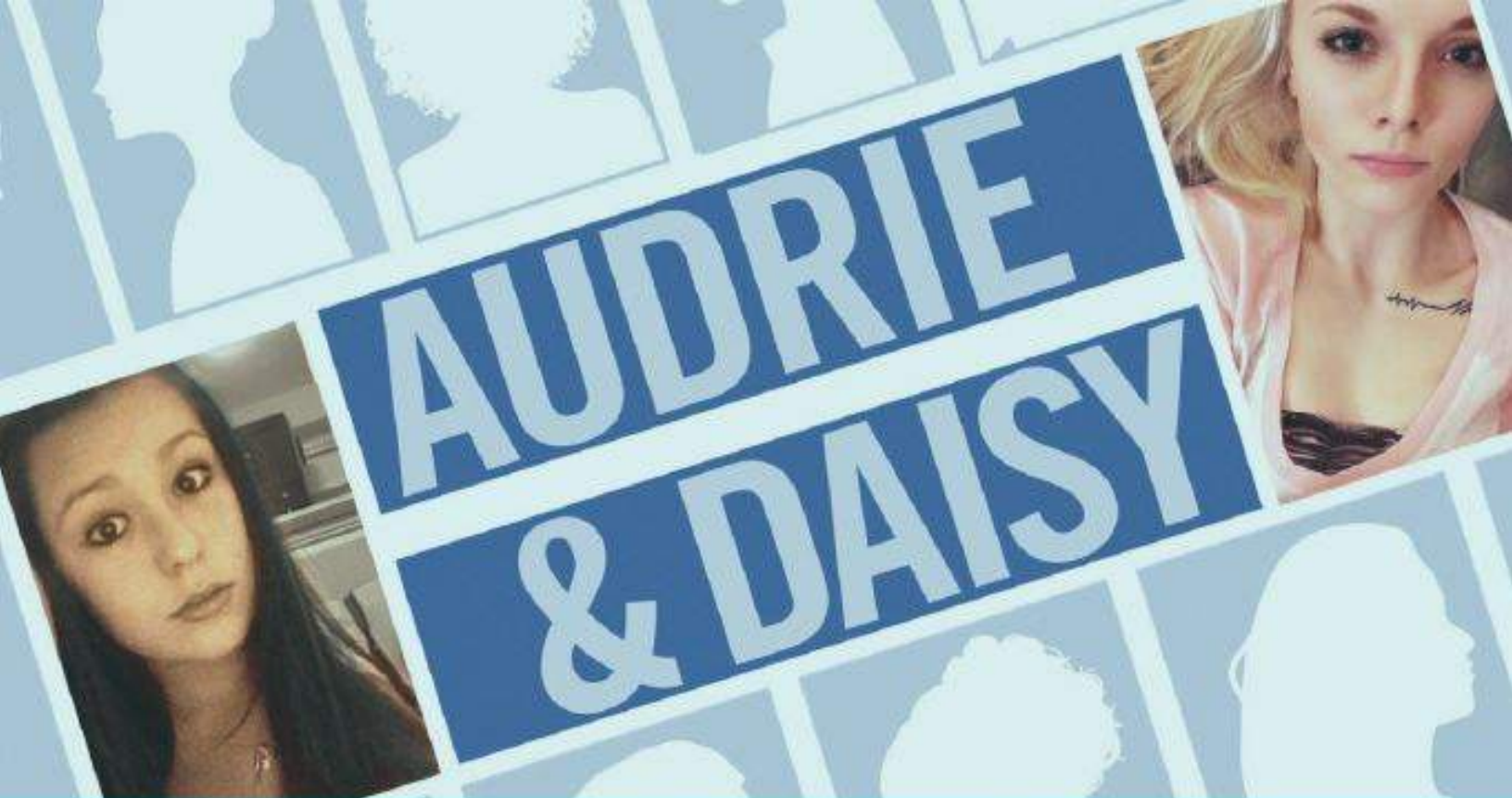
The YWCA provides comprehensive support services to individuals who have or are experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence. The organization has long understood that victimization is never a person's fault, and that perpetrators should be held accountable for their actions. In line with this notion is a philosophy of prevention that seeks to prevent perpetration of sexual violence rather than putting all responsibility for preventing assault on potential victims. The YWCA also recognizes that perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence cut across demographic lines, and to focus on only one part of the population is to exclude many others who could benefit from prevention education.

Pictured: Members of the YWCA's new Young Women for Change group, empowerment programming for female-identifying youth, put their feet forward at the Women's March on Lansing in January 2017.



Risk reduction vs. prevention

Sexual violence prevention is often thought of in terms of teaching individuals self-defense classes, staying away from alcohol at parties, and covering oneself in baggy clothing. In fact, these notions are actually known as risk reduction. Risk reduction methods can help someone reduce their risk of becoming a victim of sexual violence, but can never keep someone 100 percent safe and will not stop a perpetrator from choosing someone else as their target. This is why true prevention focuses on preventing perpetration of violence through comprehensive discussions on healthy relationships, sexuality, consent, and expectations. True prevention also requires continued support through environmental efforts, such as school wide campaigns, school staff who demonstrate healthy attitudes, policies that address sexual violence, parental understanding of risk and protective factors, and community support. The YWCA is happy to begin moving toward this holistic approach to prevention, and encourages others to begin the dialogue of what preventing sexual violence in their settings could look like.



An invitation to parents, high school students, and community members.

It's time to take a hard look at the impact of sexual assault on teens, their families, and our community.

Audrie & Daisy is an urgent, real-life drama that examines the ripple effects on families, friends, schools, and communities when two underage young women find that sexual assault crimes against them have been caught on camera. Audrie & Daisy takes a hard look at America's teenagers who are coming of age in this new world of social media bullying, spun wildly out of control.

Film Screening Details:

Date: Thursday, April 13, 2017

Time: doors at 5:30pm, screening begins at 6:00pm

Location: Wealthy Theatre; 1130 Wealthy Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI

Cost: No charge, space is limited, first-come-first served.

Hosted by Young Leaders Against Violence

Following the film, YLAV will be hosting a panel discussion with local professionals from fields of law enforcement, prevention, and victim services.

Don't miss this opportunity!



Audrie & Daisy deals with sexual assault, extreme bullying, and suicide. There are depictions of teen alcohol abuse and some profanity. We encourage parents to attend and discuss this with their teens.





TRAININGS AVAILABLE FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

BY THE KENT COUNTY
CHILDREN'S ASSESSMENT CENTER

It is the mission of the Kent County Children's Assessment Center to assess and support child victims of suspected sexual assault and educate children and the community to prevent such assaults. How do we do that? Through community outreach and education.

The CAC is now offering a multitude of trainings to help various professionals, including educators, doctors, youth serving organizations, etc., understand and recognize child sexual abuse and the impact it has on children. Child sexual abuse thrives in secrecy, and we want our community to be a voice for those who may not have one. We currently offer the following trainings:

- *Child Sexual Abuse 101 (The basics of child sexual abuse)
- *Internet Safety 101 (The basics of internet safety)
- *The Purpose of the Children's Assessment Center
- *Darkness to Light (Stewards of Children)

If you are interested in learning more about any of these trainings, please contact Community Advocate, Misti DeVries, at 616.336.5164 or mdevries@cac-kent.org.

Did You Know?

- Approximately 1 in 10 children will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18
- 90% of all offenders are someone the child or family knows, loves, and trusts
- The only risk factor for a child to be sexually abused is that they be a child

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT SEXUAL ASSAULT

- 1. Stop victim blaming.** Sexual assault is never a victim's fault. Questioning what someone was wearing or drinking, or how hard they fought back, takes the blame off the perpetrator and puts it on the victim. This perpetuates rape culture.
- 2. Speak out against rape culture.** No more "boys will be boys" or "it's just locker room talk." Disrupt the social norms that perpetuate sexual violence in our culture like glorifying power over others, objectifying women, tolerating violence and aggression, promoting male dominance and adults' misuse of power over children.
- 3. Support programs that address sexual assault.** Call your legislators and let them know these programs matter to you. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has streamlined criminal justice responses to violence against women, enhanced education and training, and supported funding streams for direct service programs to adequately service their community's needs. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is an important source of funding for addressing domestic and sexual violence. VOCA funds rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, counseling programs, support groups, advocacy, and case management services.