

# Press Kit for Media Professionals Reporting On Sexual Violence

This press kit provides sexual violence resources, facts, and tips on interviewing survivors of sexual violence. Unfortunately many myths about sexual assault are still prevalent in our culture and society and those myths may stand in the way of sexual assault victims getting the help and resources they need.

By educating yourself on the dynamics and facts about sexual violence in Wake County, North Carolina and the nation, you can help inform and educate the public about this crime and help advance a society that will not tolerate sexual violence. When reporting on the issue, we ask the media to take into careful consideration the safety of these victims.

Please include InterAct in your story to connect audiences with support:

## **InterAct 24 Hour Crisis Hotlines**

Domestic Violence: 919-828-7740

Rape/Sexual Assault: 919-828-8304

Solace Center: 919-828-3067

Spanish Hotline: 844-203-8896

## **What is Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence is any type of unwanted sexual contact. This can include words and actions of a sexual nature against a person's will and without their consent. A person may use force, threats, manipulation, or coercion to commit sexual violence.

## **Sexual Violence Statistics**

- Every two minutes another American is sexually assaulted. (Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015).
- Ages 12-34 are the highest risk years for rape and sexual assault. (Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders (1997).

## **About Sexual Violence**

- Forms of sexual violence
  - Rape or sexual assault
  - Child sexual assault and incest
  - Sexual assault by a person's spouse or partner
  - Unwanted sexual contact/touching
  - Sexual harassment
  - Sexual exploitation and trafficking
  - Exposing one's genitals or naked body to other(s) without consent
  - Watching someone in private acts without their knowledge or permission
- Consent is voluntary, mutual, and can be withdrawn at any time. Reasons someone might not consent include fear, age, illness, disability, and/or influence of alcohol or other drugs.

- Anyone can experience sexual violence, including children, teens, adults, and elders. Those who sexually abuse can be acquaintances, family members, trusted individuals, or strangers.

### **Covering Sexual Violence**

#### Tips on Interview Questions

When covering sexual assault issues, please consider the following:

- Rape is often envisioned as a “dark alley” crime committed by a lurking stranger. This image is inconsistent with the majority of sexual violence that occurs. Portraying perpetrators as “normal,” everyday people, and people who are often known to the victim provides a more accurate depiction of sexual assault.
- Identifying the victim of a sexual assault in media coverage is unconscionable and contributes to the humiliation and victimization the victim has already experienced. Survivors of sexual assault may agree to be interviewed to help raise public awareness. However, never identify a victim without his or her explicit permission.
- In addition to physical trauma, individuals who have been victims of rape, incest, or sexual assault may feel guilty or responsible for the abuse, question their own judgment, and/or feel betrayed. When questioning victims, avoid questions that imply fault on the part of the victim.

For example, avoid questions about:

- What the victim was wearing at the time of the assault. Rape is driven by a desire for power and control and sometimes by a desire to humiliate. It is not a crime of lust. Asking what the victim was wearing is victim-blaming.
- Whether the victim was drinking alcohol or taking drugs at the time of the assault, unless it is directly at issue in the case. Rape/sexual assault is a crime. Period. A victim whose house was burgled wouldn’t be quizzed as to whether he or she was intoxicated prior to the crime. Remember that victims are never to blame for the sexual assault.
- Sexual violence between married spouses is a crime and can be one of the means by which a domestic violence perpetrator dominates and humiliates his or her victim.
- A finding of “not guilty” in a rape case does not mean that a crime was not committed and that the accused is “innocent.” It means simply that a jury was not presented with enough evidence to overcome reasonable doubt.
- Refrain from referring to an alleged rape in ways that imply the contact was consensual. In a rape, the parties did not “have sex.” An adult does not “have sex” with a child—it is rape. Words are powerful.
- Be very careful when interviewing family, friends, and neighbors of either the victim or the accused that their statements don’t blame the victim or attempt to exonerate the accused. For example, statements by witnesses that the perpetrator “is such a nice guy” or “would never do something like that” do not add to the facts of the story, and only further traumatize the victim.

## About InterAct

- Who We Are: InterAct provides domestic violence and sexual assault services reaching more than 60,000 Wake County residents annually by saving lives, rebuilding lives and securing safer futures.
- Mission: Dedicated to ending the cycle of domestic and sexual violence in Wake County, North Carolina, InterAct saves lives, rebuilds lives, and secures safer futures for victims and survivors and their families.
- Media Contact:  
Josh Littlejohn  
Development Officer  
Direct Dial: 919-987-1116  
InterAct Media Cell Phone: 919-706-9755  
[joshl@interactofwake.org](mailto:joshl@interactofwake.org)

If you are a member of the media on deadline and are reaching out after hours or on a weekend, please contact the InterAct Media Cell Phone at 919-706-9755.

Adapted from SCCADVASA