

## **Planning for Virtual Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

*April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, where we work to build a connected community dedicated to ending sexual violence and supporting survivors. April 2021 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first official SAAM.*

- SAAM has traditionally been focused on public awareness events and messaging. As awareness of sexual violence has skyrocketed in the past decades, we should pivot to engage more specifically in prevention.
  - To begin, identify what prevention strategies you will be using, or what risk and protective factors you will be addressing. In other words, pick a clear goal for your prevention efforts, grounded in best practices and best available evidence.
  - If you are planning on doing a program, event, or campaign for the public, decide on the specific actions, behaviors, or skills individuals would have to adopt to contribute to this goal.
  - This is also a good opportunity to reconsider systems and policies that contribute to prevention. Prevention involves community and societal change, not just individual behavior change, and SAAM can be a moment to recognize this and publicize these efforts for broader change.

### **Raise Your Impact**

- Approach your audience as allies, instead of potential perpetrators or potential victims. Focus on things they can do, instead of only things they cannot do.
- Give your audience specific and realistic action steps for prevention behaviors.
- Know your audience and speak to them: consider their norms and values, their language, etc. What would motivate them to want to be part of prevention efforts?
- Use messages that are clear and specific, and do not contribute to systems of oppression (racism, homophobia, toxic masculinity, victim blaming, etc.).
- Reach out to influential members of your community and directly invite them to participate in your efforts.

### **Best Practices for Online Events**

- Decide on a clear purpose and theme.
- Choose the right platform; consider accessibility and the type of event.
- Keep the event short and plan content for each minute; downtime can be uninviting and off-putting during virtual events.
- Create videos and visual effects to break up speakers and avoid downtime.

- Decide whether speakers will be live or pre-recorded (or both!) and make sure they are comfortable with whichever option you choose.
- Create an Agenda or “Run of Program” and distribute to anyone speaking live or providing behind-the-scenes support.
- Assign someone to monitor the chat/audience, and have a plan for removing people who misbehave from the event (various platforms offer different options for this)
- Run a tech rehearsal and dress rehearsal for the event. If the dress rehearsal is run during a different time than the event, leave extra time before the event begins to check lighting and camera angles.
- All speakers and support staff should log on at least half an hour prior to the start to sort out any potential tech and lighting issues and cue up all pre-recorded content.

### Best Practices for Online Campaigns

- Know your audience: Who are you trying to reach?
- Set specific goals, ways to participate, and a timeline.
- Plan your content: think about messaging, language, tone, and platform.
- When choosing a platform, consider content style:
  - Instagram is a visual platform ideal for graphics and photographs.
  - Facebook lends itself to more complex text posts and link-sharing.
  - Twitter is best for concise messages.
  - Youtube is a video-based platform for both short and long-form content.
  - TikTok is a video-based platform for short-form content.
- Only post content (information, research, statistics, etc.) from trusted organizations.
- Use SAAM hashtags to widen your reach.
- Tag other organizations when sharing their content or referencing them.
- Remember to include your logo on any graphics.

Participate in MCASA’s SAAM Campaign! Our theme is “Moments Create Movements,” and how our small actions can create major change in the sexual violence prevention movement. To launch our campaign, we want to hear from people who live and work in Maryland about small ways they help prevent sexual violence. We also want to know what people think their communities could do to better prevent sexual violence. These responses may be featured on our social media throughout April!

To participate, complete this very brief form (<https://forms.gle/FgrhZih5DtKa5DXL8>) to respond to the two questions above, and share with your network so we can learn from people across the state.

