Talking Points – Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)

General

• April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month.
• One in three women and one in six men are sexually assaulted in their lifetimes.
• We all know survivors of sexual violence. They are our friends, our family, our neighbors and co-workers. They are us.
• The majority of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.
• Sex offenders often target those individuals that they perceive as vulnerable.
• Sexual violence is as much a physical as a psychological and emotional assault. Offenders will target victims that they perceive as vulnerable in each of these areas.
• The Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that women between the ages of 16 and 24 years are at greatest risk for rape. Although, rape can happen to anyone, male or female, across the lifespan.

Consent

• In Wisconsin the word “NO” is not necessary.
• Legally, consent IS: words or overt actions indicating a FREELY given agreement, intelligent, knowing and voluntary, an affirmative (NOT THE ABSENCE OF A NEGATIVE)
• Legally, consent IS NOT: silence, a failure to fight back, implied.
• Consent is null and void if: judgment is impaired by drugs or mental illness, someone changes her/his mind, someone under the age of 18 is consenting to sexual intercourse, someone under the age of 16 is consenting to sexual contact, it was given under pressure/coercion.

Prevention

• We need to broaden the conversation by discussing the societal context within which rape is so common.
• We need to realize the connection between rape-supportive attitudes and real acts of sexual violence.
• Discussion too often focuses on the actions of the victim. This promotes harmful attitudes and stereotypes of women, while letting male behavior go un-examined – which is how male privilege persists.