PRESS RELEASE

Sexual Assault is not Groping

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Madison – April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), which is a time to raise public awareness about sexual assault. While there are many events occurring across the state honoring SAAM (http://www.wcasa.org/pages/Events-SAAM.php), we also believe now is a good time to discuss what sexual assault really is. Sexual violence occurs when someone is forced or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. It is a broad term that includes rape, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual contact, and human trafficking. “When talking about sexual assault, it is incumbent on all of us to describe it in a way that does not minimize the true nature of this horrific crime” said Pennie Meyers, Executive Director of WCASA. “It is about domination and exerting control over another person.”

The language we use when describing sexual assault has an impact on survivors, perpetrators, and communities. WCASA believes recent media accounts describing felony sexual assault as “groping” minimizes the impact of this crime. Minimizing sexual assault sends a message that our communities don’t take this crime seriously, which negatively impacts efforts to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. “Any nonconsensual sexual contact is a crime” commented Pennie Meyers. “It can have a long-term impact on a survivor’s sense of trust in others and feelings of safety. We owe it to all survivors to call it what it is – sexual assault.”