

## Community Health Corner – April 2019

### Sexual Assault Awareness Month Comes to an End

In the United States, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it. It happens in every community and anyone can experience sexual violence, including children, teens, adults, and seniors. Sexual violence isn't just a women's issue—1 in 6 men have experienced physical sexual violence in their lifetime and LGBTQ communities encounter a much higher rate of sexual assault than heterosexuals.

Sexual violence is any type of unwanted sexual contact – including sexual assault and rape. It can include words and actions like sexual harassment, catcalling, and non-consensual sharing of private images such as “revenge porn.” It can be committed by a family member, intimate partner or spouse, trusted individual, stranger, or acquaintance. In 8 out of 10 cases of rape, the survivor knew the perpetrator.

It doesn't matter what someone was wearing, how they were acting, if they were drinking, or what type of relationship they had with the person who abused them, it is never the victim's fault. Yet, sexual violence often goes unreported for many reasons, including concerns of not being believed, fear of retaliation, distrust of law enforcement, shame or fear of being blamed, and/or pressure from others. Chances are you know someone who has experienced sexual violence, even if they haven't told you. Being supportive and non-judgmental is important when a survivor chooses to disclose what has happened to them. Survivors are listening to how you talk about sexual violence, and hearing that you understand and believe them may help them feel safe. Our words and actions shape the world around us. Whether you are speaking out against “locker room talk” or helping someone better understand the myths surrounding sexual violence, your voice is powerful and necessary in preventing sexual violence and abuse.

If you have experienced sexual violence, you are not alone. You can call or text Embrace for free, confidential support 24/7. We can explain options for reporting or not reporting the crime, share ideas for coping with the aftermath, connect you to medical care and available resources, or just listen to what's on your mind. We will always support you and your choices. Phone: 800.924.0556, Text: 715.532.6976 or visit [embracewi.org](http://embracewi.org) for more information.

The Washburn County Health Department may be able to provide emergency contraception, sexually transmitted infection testing, pregnancy testing, and other reproductive health services and referrals. Call today to find out more at 715-635-4400.