

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **President designates Sexual Assault Awareness Month; Kansans can do something today to end sexual violence**

**TOPEKA, KAN., APRIL 9, 2009** — On April 8, President Obama signed a proclamation dedicating the month of April as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. He urges all Americans to make the prevention of sexual assault a priority in their communities. The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) estimates that **3,040 women and 962 men are raped each year** in Kansas, and 244,790 women and 39,854 men will be raped in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

“Sexual violence is happening in every community in Kansas — regardless of its size or location,” said Sandy Barnett, executive director of KCSDV. “Women, children and men are being sexually violated every day, throughout the state. We are urging all Kansans to take a stand against sexual violence. It will take all of us working together to end sexual violence in Kansas.”

Sexual violence includes sexual actions, completed or attempted, and words that coerce, manipulate or are forced upon someone with the intent to intimidate, humiliate, dominate, subjugate and control. Sexual violence includes any of the following acts:

- Rape (acquaintance, marital/partner, date, drug-facilitated, stranger)
- Sexual assault
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment and bullying
- Incest
- Molestation
- Trafficking and exploitation

“One rape occurs every seven hours in Kansas.<sup>2</sup> We use this figure with caution because it only reflects the number of rapes that were reported to law enforcement, and we know that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes — nationally 58 percent of sexual assaults are *NOT* reported,”<sup>3</sup> Barnett said.

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To create a snapshot of sexual violence in Kansas, KCSDV conducted a Sexual Violence Census of its 30 member programs that provide direct services to victims. “On September 17, 2008, advocacy programs served **101 victims of sexual violence in Kansas — in ONE DAY**. This figure does *not* include crisis calls on that day,” Barnett said.

**There is help for victims of sexual violence in Kansas.** KCSDV’s 30 member programs provide a variety of services for victims in Kansas, services include but are not limited to, accompanying the victim during medical exams and forensic evidence collection, providing information and support throughout the healing process, assisting with locating resources such as employment and victim compensation benefits, and advocating for the victim through the criminal justice system.

**To find a sexual violence program serving your area,** please visit [www.kcsdv.org/ksresources.html](http://www.kcsdv.org/ksresources.html) or call (785) 232-9784.

**KCSVD encourages all Kansans to do something today to end sexual violence in their community.** Here are a few simple things that every Kansan can do to make a difference:

- Learn the facts about sexual violence and speak out against rape myths
- Be familiar with sexual violence advocacy organizations in your community and be ready to make a referral — [www.kcsdv.org/ksresources.html](http://www.kcsdv.org/ksresources.html)
- Know the Kansas Crisis Hotline number — **(888) END-ABUSE**
- Donate to or volunteer at your local sexual violence advocacy program
- A variety of resources are available at [www.kcsdv.org/saam09.html](http://www.kcsdv.org/saam09.html)

**If you know a victim of sexual violence:**

1. **Listen** — If a victim is ready to talk, let her/him know that you will listen without judgment.
2. **Believe** — Let her/him know that you do.
3. **Don’t blame** — Victims often blame themselves, and the violence is NOT their fault.
4. **Make a referral** — The Kansas Crisis Hotline is available 24/7. Call **(888) END-ABUSE**.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), occurring in April, originated in 2001 as an opportunity to raise awareness about sexual violence on a national level. Learn more about SAAM at the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) website, [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org).

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV) is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent and eliminate sexual and domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. KCSDV is a coalition of 30 community-based, sexual and domestic violence advocacy programs that provide direct services and support for victims in Kansas. Visit KCSDV online at [www.kcsdv.org](http://www.kcsdv.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, “Sexual and Domestic Violence Advocacy Services in Kansas” (forthcoming 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Kansas Bureau of Investigation, “A Report on Domestic Violence and Rape Statistics in Kansas as Reported by Law Enforcement Agencies 2007.”

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Criminal Victimization Survey, “Criminal Victimization 2007.”