

## PRESS STATEMENT

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### **State Coalition Welcomes Broader Conversation**

Topeka, Kan. – The firestorm about domestic violence in the NFL and sexual assault on college campuses is not just about professional sports and educational institutions; it is about every community and every workplace across the state and nation.

Domestic violence impacts millions across the country, including thousands and thousands in Kansas. One in 4 women in the U.S. have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner. This means they have been hit with a fist or something hard, beaten, or slammed against something. One in 4 murders in Kansas are domestic violence-related and law enforcement receives 25,000 domestic violence calls each year. Kansas domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy programs regularly respond to over 20,000 crisis hotline calls annually. Nearly 1 in 5 women in the U.S. have been raped in her lifetime. Think about the magnitude of these numbers and what this means to everyone around you.

Domestic violence and sexual assault are not new problems. They did not start a couple weeks ago with the new NFL accountability and education policies. Campus sexual assault did not start when the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized last year and federal efforts forced this problem to be addressed. These issues have been with us historically for a very long time and are serious epidemics.

Advocacy programs located in communities across Kansas have worked for many years to stem the tide of this violence. Not only do they provide services for victims every day, but they also work to change a culture that turns its head away from and tolerates these very ugly issues.

As you think and talk about these issues, we urge you to look to the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, your state coalition that provides training and expert advice, for information and assistance. We urge you to look to your local domestic violence and sexual assault service provider to find out what is happening in your community. We urge you not to ask “why does she stay?” or “what did she do?” But rather, ask “why does he hit or rape his wife, his girlfriend, his date?” Change the conversation; stop the victim-blaming. This will move us forward.

As you think and talk about these issues, promise to take at least a small step in support of ending this violence. Volunteer for your local advocacy program; learn how to make a referral; make a donation; continue the conversation. It will take all of us to turn the tide and end this violence.

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KCSDV is a network of 29 sexual assault and domestic violence advocacy programs in Kansas. These programs provide direct services to victims of sexual and domestic violence. KCSDV's purpose is to prevent and eliminate sexual and domestic violence by providing technical assistance, training, legislative advocacy, and policy analysis on a variety of topics for member programs, professionals and ally organizations across Kansas.