

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Dear Workplaces Respond Partners:

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) marks a time to raise awareness about the impacts of sexual assault, harassment, and abuse. Organizations and communities can come together to develop strategies to prevent sexual violence in workplaces, college campuses, the military, faith-based centers, sports, and in the home. The theme for SAAM 2025, [“Together We Act, United We Change,”](#) encourages collaboration in continuation of the mission to end sexual violence.



The National Resource Center: Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence (Workplaces Respond) is pleased to share with you this 2025 SAAM Toolkit, which includes resources to enhance your organizations capacity to prevent, respond to, and support workers affected by sexual assault. Whether you are just beginning this work or building on existing programs, our goal is to provide you with practical tools and resources that are easy to implement. There is no need to reserve these strategies for the month of April. This toolkit offers quick tips to guide you toward sustainable change and, for those looking to go deeper, links to more comprehensive materials.

Workplaces Respond is available to provide **free technical assistance** for all workplaces to support the improvement, creation, and implementation of programs and policies that prevent and address domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment (DVSASSH) in the workplace. Please [use this link](#) to submit requests for assistance and visit [our website](#) to learn more.

With gratitude,
Workplaces Respond
workplacesrespond@futureswithoutviolence.org



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Sexual Assault & The World of Work

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual Assault is a form of sexual violence that includes any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by federal, tribal, or state law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.¹ This can include forced sexual intercourse, sodomy, molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. When these behaviors occur in the workplace, they are not only criminal but also violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act's prohibition against sex-based harassment.²

Any person, regardless of their sex, age, ethnicity, religion, marital status, or disability, can be a victim of sexual assault. Any person can also be a perpetrator of sexual assault; that person may choose to commit sexual assault in order to exert or maintain [power and control](#) over the person they are harming. Sexual assault can occur between romantic partners, spouses, family members, colleagues, acquaintances, or strangers.

How Does Sexual Assault Impact the World of Work?

The world of work refers to any location in which employees, paid and unpaid interns, contractors, volunteers, board members, consultants, and temporary workers perform their job duties. This includes but is not limited to:

- public and private spaces in the employer's office building;
- places where a worker takes a break, eats a meal, or uses washing and changing facilities;
- a temporary offsite work location;
- a person's home while remote working;
- a hotel or restaurant used by an employee on work travel;
- a conference center or training site;
- a work-related social gathering; or
- online or virtual work communications.



Sexual assault could happen in any of these spaces in the world of work. It could be committed by or against another worker or a visitor to the work site.

Prevalence of Sexual Assault

Whether occurring in or outside the workplace, sexual assault has significant impacts on the survivor, their coworkers, the perpetrator, and the workplace overall. The most significant impacts on the workplace are turnover, productivity, and safety.

54.3% of women & 30.7% of men

in the U.S. have experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime.³

23% of women & 9% of men

Reported experiencing workplace sexual assault, and 97% reported experiencing escalating incidences of sexual harassment prior to experiencing sexual assault.⁴

1/7 women & 1/17 men

Sought a new job assignment, changed jobs, or quit a job due to the abuse they were experiencing in the workplace.⁵

30% women, 18% men

Survey respondents most frequently reported feeling anxiety or depression as a result of experiencing sexual harassment and assault.⁶

Learn more about [sexual assault and the workplace here](#).

Impacts on the World of Work

What Does Sexual Assault Look Like?

Sexual assault is one aspect of sexual violence, an umbrella term encompassing an array of non-consensual behaviors that can impact the world of work, including but not limited to:

EXAMPLES

Sexual Abuse:

Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent.⁷

.....
An employer forces himself on an employee every evening after work and threatens to decrease her work hours if she does not comply.

Rape (attempted or completed):

Non-consensual sexual acts.

A foreman rapes a farmworker while she works in isolation in a field.⁸

Sexual Harassment:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Includes offensive remarks about a person's sex.⁹

A masseuse is pressured for sexual favors while massaging a client.

Stalking:

Engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.¹⁰

A customer frequents an employee's office to look for them and leaves the employee love letters and sexually explicit voicemails.

Indecent Exposure:

Flashing or exposing one's genitalia in public or an inappropriate location and context for one's own sexual gratification.

An employee is flashed by a fellow train rider on their commute to work.

Impacts on the World of Work, cont.

EXAMPLES

Voyeurism:

Watching someone who does not know or consent to being watched, while undressing or in a private setting, for sexual gratification.

.....
A maintenance worker installs cameras in a workplace restroom.

Sexual Exploitation:

Profiting (financially or otherwise) from the use of another person's body in a sexual manner; taking advantage of one's vulnerable or dependent state.¹¹

An individual, disgruntled after being fired posts images of his former supervisor on pornography websites.

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence:¹²

Nonconsensual acts committed by one's intimate partner.

An executive accused of raping his wife misses work to attend court hearings.

Tech-Enabled Sexual Abuse:¹³

Stalking, harassment, and sexual abuse and exploitation through the use of technology.

A manager of a youth program solicits images from the minors they work with through email.

Sex Trafficking:

Individuals are compelled to engage in commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.¹⁴

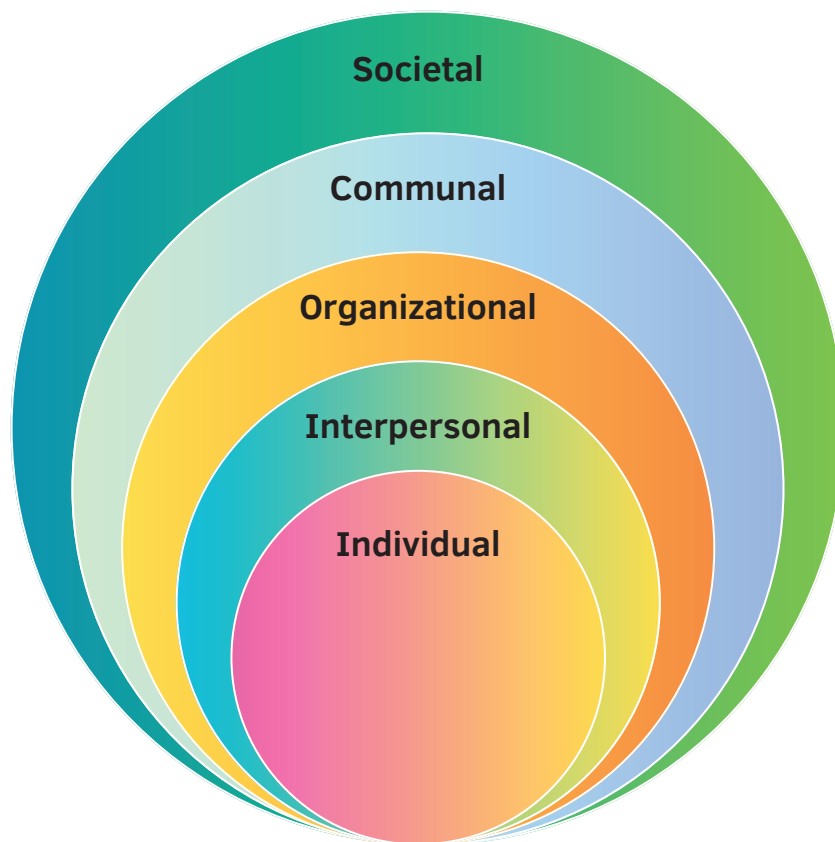
A person poses as a job recruiter online in order to recruit someone in need of work, then coerces them into the sex trade.

Each state has specific legal definitions for crimes related to sexual violence. While an employee's experience may not match the exact legal definition of your state's law, they still need support to recover from the harm they experienced. An employee who experiences any acts of sexual violence, within or outside the world of work, may experience trauma, impacting their ability to show up to work, perform well at work, and to be and feel safe at work.

Any employee who commits acts of sexual violence, regardless of whether their acts fall within the scope of their state laws, may be a liability to their employer, a danger to others in the workplace, and experience social or legal consequences that impact their work.

Addressing Our Impact

Sexual assault, and all forms of sexual violence, are preventable. A helpful framework for changing our impact is the Social-Ecological model (SEM). The SEM helps visualize the interplay of factors that influence human behavior. These factors can be separated into five categories: ¹⁵



- **Societal:** Efforts that strengthen larger systems and promote prosocial norms and policies.
- **Communal:** Our broader social, cultural, and physical environments such as neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, places of worship, healthcare facilities, recreation, etc.
- **Organizational:** Workplaces and other institutions with policies, practices, and environments that impact our behavior.
- **Interpersonal:** Our relationships to others such as our family, friends, peers, intimate partners, and colleagues.
- **Individual:** Our personal characteristics such as our attitudes and beliefs, personality, and demographics.

This framework can be used to identify and address factors that contribute to sexual assault in the world of work. The SEM can also be used to determine strategies for responding to and preventing sexual assault and other forms of violence. To learn more about the SEM as a framework for violence prevention, view [this resource by the Centers for Disease Control](#).

Together We Act, United We Change

SAAM's 2025 theme emphasizes the importance of communities working together to prevent sexual violence. Below are some ways employers and employees can work together to educate, prevent, and respond to sexual assault in the world of work using the SEM framework:



Individual

- **Normalize consent.** Consent is an agreement to engage in intimate physical contact with another person. It can be sexual or nonsexual, for example asking before touching someone's hair or giving them a friendly hug. Consent is not contractual, but rather a lifelong practice of communicating and respecting the boundaries of yourself and others. Practice: asking for consent, enforcing your personal boundaries, and humbly accepting rejection when others enforce theirs. Learn more about consent from the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center's I Ask for Consent campaign](#).
- **Avoid victim-blaming.** Sexual assault is never the victim's fault.
- **Use appropriate language.** Be mindful of what you say in public and private that could be offensive or inappropriate, and avoid jokes related to sexual violence or other forms of violence.

- **Believe survivors.** Many people do not report sexual assault for fear they will not be believed. If someone discloses to you, show them empathy and support, leaving any questions or judgements to those involved in the investigation process. Visit [Start by Believing](#) to learn more.
- Given the high [rates of child sexual abuse](#), assume that at least one of your employees or colleagues is a survivor of sexual assault. **Approach discussions about this topic with care and respect** for a variety of survivor experiences. For example, some survivors choose to report to the police, others don't; some hold ill will toward the person who harmed them, others don't. Avoid shaming someone for their reaction or response and learn to be [trauma-informed](#).
- Treat your coworkers, intimate partner(s), family, friends, children, acquaintances, and strangers with **respect and dignity**.



Interpersonal

Together We Act, United We Change, cont.



Organizational

- **Hold offenders accountable.** Create a comprehensive workplace policy that outlines your organization's commitment to prevention and obligation to respond to sexual assault that happens in the world of work. Organize a climate survey or environmental scan to determine the current safety of workplace culture. Then continuously [review](#) and [evaluate](#) your policies and procedures.
- **Respect [confidentiality](#).** If someone discloses to you that they were harmed, do not share this information without their permission or consent.
- Know if you are a [mandated reporter](#) and what you are **required to report**.

- Form or participate in a [sexual assault response team](#) to coordinate efforts with other social service professionals in your community. Know what is going on in your community that impacts you, your colleagues, your clients, customers, and partners.
- Create a **list of resources** for employees who are survivors. Get to know support professionals in your community so you can provide warm referrals to them. Consider donating to or volunteering with your local [sexual assault service organization](#).



Communal

- Host a campaign (for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, or anytime of the year) and encourage staff and clients/customers to participate. This could include a day of action, wearing a ribbon or changing the organization's Zoom background to raise awareness, and inspiring workers and the community to learn about and **support policies** that center sexual assault survivors, such as [leave from work and unemployment insurance](#).



Societal

Learn more about preventing sexual assault from the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#).

Resources for Employers

Workplaces Respond Resources

These resources from the National Resource Center, funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, will help you learn more about stalking, support survivors within your organization, and create workplace policies and structures to prevent and respond to dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment (DVSASSH).

- [Why is DVSASSH a Workplace Issue?](#)
 - This factsheet describes why domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment are critical issues to workplace safety and worker well-being.
- [Sexual Assault and the Workplace](#)
 - This factsheet describes the ways in which sexual assault impacts employees and the workplace.
- [Recognizing the Signs](#)
 - This resource describes potential signs that may indicate employees are experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- [Guide for Supervisors](#)
 - This guide provides information for supervisors on preventing and responding to DVSASSH in the workplace.
- [Employer Guide to Safety Planning](#)
 - Safety plans are an important tool to help reduce a survivor's risk of harm from an abusive individual. This guide provides information on safety planning with a focus on the workplace.
- [Addressing the Impacts of Violence and Trauma in the Workplace](#)
 - This guide describes the traumatic effects of DVSASSH, how to recognize the elements of trauma, and how to respond in a survivor-centered way to help ensure safe, productive, and resilient workplaces for all workers.
- [Preventing Incidents of DVSASSH in the Workplace](#)
 - This factsheet describes how to mitigate threats and prevent incidents of DVSASSH in the workplace.

Resources for Survivors

Helplines

- [Victim Connect Resource Center:](#)
 - Available M-F, 9:00AM-5:00PM ET via phone, chat, or text:
 - 1-855-4VICTIM (855-484-2846)
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline:](#)
 - Available 24/7 via call, chat, and text.
 - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); TTY: 1-800-787-3224; Text “START” to 88788
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline:](#)
 - Available 24/7, callers will be connected with a trained sexual assault advocate in their area. Also available via chat on the website.
 - 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- [The Deaf Hotline:](#)
 - Available 24/7 via phone and email.
 - 1-855-812-1001
- [Strong Hearts Native Helpline:](#)
 - 24/7 safe, confidential and anonymous domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives
 - 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
- [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative Helpline](#)
 - Available 24/7 for victims of image-based sexual abuse.
 - 1-844-878-2274

Resources

- [Decision Tree for Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#)
 - This checklist outlines key considerations for employees experiencing sexual harassment and other harms in the workplace.
- [Advancing Safety through Employment Rights](#)
 - This project provides education and awareness activities to survivors, their advocates, and lawyers to help increase awareness about how these protections may help survivors.

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