

CREATING SAFE
SPACE FOR SURVIVORS

engaging faith leaders & coaches



Every April, the sexual violence prevention movement recognizes Sexual Assault Awareness Month through community engagement and outreach. This year's theme, *Engaging New Voices*, strives to engage key community leaders whose influence is necessary in achieving cultural change. The campaign focuses on collaborating with faith leaders, fathers, coaches, and members of Greek life on college and university campuses this April and throughout the rest of the year. This resource discusses practical ways to collaborate with new community partners.

WHY ENGAGE FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Faith communities seek to offer a structured space for calm, reflection, and support. Individuals and families rely on these spaces for counsel, education, and a sense of connection and higher purpose. The communities in which congregations exist also benefit from a range of activities including safety and awareness campaigns, fundraising events, donation drives, services for the homeless, and others. Faith communities are often a key touchstone in people's lives.

The sexual violence prevention movement's mission is to address the forces that perpetuate sexual violence, while also promoting resilience and healthy behaviors in communities. Faith communities offer a unique partnership, one with a strong influence on people's lives and a commitment to a message of peace, hope, and support. Faith leaders and clergy are seeking opportunities to help followers in their everyday lives. This provides sexual violence programs a chance to engage key stakeholders in important conversations around survivor safety and trauma-informed practice.



WHY ENGAGE ATHLETIC TEAMS?

Similar to communities of faith and belief, athletic teams are united in their commitment to the activity or sport, as well as the sense of connection between members. Whether connected to a school or a community, athletic teams bring young people and their families together around a common interest. Teams offer mentorship, a consistent adult role model, and life skills training for athletes. Sports and competition can also teach values such as humility, trust, and honesty.

Organizations working to address sexual violence can engage athletic associations, coaches, and parents with information and training that enhances these positive pro-social norms, while addressing harmful ones. These individuals are passionate about helping children succeed personally, in life, and in school.

PROMOTING SHARED VALUES

Faith communities and athletic teams share a number of core values. These core values can serve as the building blocks of your partnership. Infusing outreach messages with a group's unique values and strengths starts conversations on a positive note and conveys an interest in mutual learning and respect.

VALUE	POSSIBLE OUTREACH MESSAGE	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Connection	"It's evident your team sees itself as a family. I noticed it last month when you took up a collection for a former teammate's brother's illness. I was hoping to chat with you about some ways we can support you in making sure everyone is cared for and supported."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer an introductory information session on responding to disclosures of abuse and mandated reporting • Help coaches and mentors build skills in addressing gendered language and harmful norms
Peace	"I have heard quite a bit about your talks on promoting peace and understanding in the world. Our organization sees itself as a peace-promoting entity as well, and I was hoping we could chat about ways to bring our messages together."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a space for program materials and/or the hotline number to be displayed in a common space • Offer guidance on how to promote equity in weekly talks and address victim-blaming
Stewardship	"We know your congregation is one that cares for the larger community and those who are in need. The winter coat drive was so impressive and helped countless people this winter. We wanted to offer you another chance to help this spring as we continue our efforts from Sexual Assault Awareness Month."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review congregation policies on educational programs and trips to ensure safety of all participants • Organize a Clothesline Project or awareness event with the congregation • Co-host a support group for survivors in the congregation's space

RESOURCES

[Unitarian Universalist Association](#) has been a leader in creating both resources and recommended processes to help make congregations safe and welcoming places to all.

The FaithTrust Institute's [What Religious Leaders Can Do to Respond to Sexual and Domestic Violence](#) lists ways to take action within a faith community.

[HEART Women & Girls](#) promotes sexual health and sexual violence awareness in Muslim communities through health education, advocacy, research and training.

[Coaching Boys Into Men](#) trains and motivates high school coaches to teach their young male athletes healthy relationship skills and that violence never equals strength.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Sport Science Institute, in partnership with the NCAA Office of Inclusion, engaged leading higher education organizations across the country to develop the publication [Sexual Violence Prevention: An Athletics Tool Kit for a Healthy and Safe Culture](#).