



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **HelpLine Promotes the Importance of Believing Survivors during Sexual Assault Awareness Month Campaign in April**

**Delaware, OH** – This April, HelpLine will engage the broader community in its annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign. In conjunction with this year’s national theme of “I Ask”, the HelpLine SARN team will focus on sub-theme of “Start by Believing” – a global campaign founded by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) - which focuses on changing how society responds to sexual assault disclosures, helping to improve the outcomes for survivors.

Start by Believing guides the response to sexual violence and “flips the script” on the message that survivors have historically received which at times has meant messages of doubt and blame, leading to feelings of fear and shame.

“It takes a lot of strength and courage for a survivor to confide to someone, whether that be a friend, family member, or another support person,” said Lauren MacDade, HelpLine Sexual Assault and Victim Services Director. “A positive, supportive reaction while being believed can have a lasting impact on the survivors healing, and can play a role in how and where they seek help and support moving forward.”

Affirming the theme, HelpLine, in cooperation and support of local community partners, will provide therapeutic events for survivors, families and friends to learn, connect and heal. Resources, opportunities to get involved, and awareness events will be available through the following programs:

- HelpLine Sexual Assault Response Network (SARN), Nourish to Flourish Survivor’s Workshop, **Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m.** (note: location disclosed upon registration)
- HelpLine SARN Volunteer Training in late April
- Delaware County Coalition of Victim Services, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, **Friday, May 3, 6 p.m.**, downtown Delaware, Ohio

Additionally, HelpLine will feature 30-days of social media content on its Facebook and Twitter channels - @helplinedelmor – which will highlight resources, information and actions you can take in support of Start by Believing.

In support of the month, the Village of Mount Gilead and City of Delaware will proclaim April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Months, while also recognizing the Day of Awareness to support the Day of Silence – a bringing attention to the harassment and bullying faced by LGBTQ youth in schools. Proclamations will be presented during the regularly scheduled council proceedings:

- [Village of Mount Gilead](#), Monday, April 1, 7 p.m.
- [City of Delaware](#), Monday, April 8, 7 p.m.

“We all have a unique role to play in sexual assault and violence prevention,” said MacDade. “Prevention is an opportunity to stop sexual violence before it happens. This means changing the social norms that allow it to exist in the first place, from individual attitudes, values, and behaviors to laws and institutions.”



MacDade continued by stating that knowing how to respond to survivors is critical because a negative response can worsen the trauma that a survivor experiences or keep survivors from seeking support, and fosters a culture that condones sexual violence, where perpetrators face no consequences for their crimes. Start by Believing stops this cycle of silence. By creating a culture of believing survivors, survivors feel supported, hopeful and will feel encouraged to seek support and healing.

In addition to SAAM, HelpLine leads a wide range of initiatives and services to support sexual assault survivors, mainly through its trauma-informed SARN program offered in Delaware, Morrow, Crawford and Wyandot counties. Available to all survivors, SARN offers healing workshops, one-one-one crisis Intervention and advocacy – regardless of when the assault occurred – and an annual retreat. Additionally, trained SARN advocates are available to assist survivors at the hospital and with law enforcement immediately following an assault, and connects survivors to resources at HelpLine and in the broader community.

MacDade believes that prevention is everyone's responsibility. "Together, we can intervene to stop concerning behavior, promote and model healthy attitudes and interaction, and believe survivors."

To learn more about SAAM events, visit <http://helplinedelmor.org/saam/>. If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, contact SARN on the free, confidential 24-hour support, information, referral, and texting line at **1.800.684.2324** or text **helpline** to **898211**.

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### **About HelpLine**

As the community's only 24/7 resource, we are the go-to for supporting and empowering change. Our highly trained specialists offer compassionate support to help meet the needs of anyone in crisis, connecting them with the right resources and empowering them to thrive. Our prevention programs address suicide and depression, sexual assault, child sexual abuse and family violence to influence change in our community. These programs are rooted in our relationships with local non-profits and agencies, giving us the connections and knowledge to get community members the support, education and volunteer opportunities they're looking for.

HelpLine is a contract provider of the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health and Recovery Services Board and Partially funded by SourcePoint. A United Way Partner, HelpLine is accredited by the American Association of Suicidology, National Alliance of Information & Referral Systems and certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. For more information, visit: [www.HelpLinedelmor.org](http://www.HelpLinedelmor.org).

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