

# rape & sexual assault prevention campaign

## media Q&As



**Q:** *The Maryland Department of Health has recently launched its first-ever media and public awareness campaign on Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention. What are the three main goals of this statewide campaign?*

**A:**

- To increase awareness of the incidence of rape and sexual assault
- To dispel myths and misperceptions about rape and sexual assault
- To publicize rape recovery services and resources available to survivors and to encourage their use



**Q:** *What are the campaign's key messages?*

**A:** The campaign has three key messages:

- Most rapists are people you know
- No matter what, without consent, it's rape
- It's never too late to begin to heal



**Q:** *Most rapists are people you know?*

**A:** Yes. When most people think of rape, they tend to picture the unknown assailant. While that does happen, our data indicate that nearly 90% of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim. This can include boyfriends, ex-husbands, other relatives or acquaintances.

Another misperception people have about rape is if someone they know forces them to have sex, it's not a rape. The victim doesn't think of it as a "crime" in the traditional sense, so they don't report it. They may also feel embarrassed, afraid or guilty to report a rape committed by someone they know.



**Q:** *Is the incidence of rape and sexual assault on the rise?*

**A:** Rape and sexual assault are the violent crimes least reported to law enforcement authorities so it is difficult to determine how many people are actually survivors. It is generally accepted that between 70 and 90% of all rapes are never reported to authorities. Rape and sexual assault are significantly underreported and far more widespread than the reported numbers would indicate.

Violent sexual crimes take an enormous personal and economic toll on both the victim and society. Therefore, one of the goals of this statewide campaign is to encourage survivors to speak out about rape and sexual assault and to seek the help that is available to them.



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**Q:** *Does the state's awareness campaign address "date or acquaintance rape?"*

**A:** Yes. Concerns about date or acquaintance rape are high on college campuses. One of our target audiences is college students and women of college age. The key message is "no matter what, without consent, it's rape. We want the general public to realize that CONSENT is the only factor that matters in determining whether a rape has occurred.

**Q:** *Since rape is one of the most under-reported crimes in Maryland and across the country, how does the state health department plan to encourage people to speak out, report their crime, and seek help?*

**A:** The state health department hopes to accomplish this by dispelling yet another myth about rape: that the victim—rather than the rapist—is somehow to blame for the rape. This myth only serves to reinforce feelings of embarrassment, shame and/or guilt among survivors and discourages them from coming forward.

In addition, campaign posters and compelling public service announcements have been produced to encourage victims and the general public to speak out about rape and sexual assault and where to call for help.

**Q:** *After dispelling myths surrounding rape and sexual assault, what's really important for a survivor to know and do to begin the healing process?*

**A:** They are not responsible for the assault. Secondly, there are numerous resources available across the State to help them recover from this trauma and to reclaim their lives. Finally, it's never too late to begin to heal, whether it's been days or decades since the rape.

**Q:** *What is the phone number to call and website to access for more information?*

**A:** 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) and/or [www.rapenomore.com](http://www.rapenomore.com).