



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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## **DHMH Launches Rape Prevention Campaign**

*Statewide initiative is designed to raise awareness, dispel myths*

BALTIMORE, MD (October 19, 2006) – Increased awareness about rape and sexual assault is the focus of an advertising campaign launched today by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH).

This first-ever statewide initiative is designed to raise awareness of the incidence of rape and sexual assault, dispel common myths and misperceptions about these violent crimes, and publicize the availability of rape recovery services throughout the State.

“Maryland, like so many other states, has far too high an incidence of reported and unreported rape,” said DHMH Secretary S. Anthony McCann. “This campaign is designed to change that trend.”

The campaign, developed by Baltimore-based Sahara Communications, has three key messages incorporated in the multi-media initiative:

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

“A key component of this innovative campaign is designed to affect change in male attitudes and norms regarding relationships with women,” said Dr. Michelle A. Gourdine, DHMH deputy secretary for Public Health Services. “This is important because in a majority of assaults, the victim knows her attacker. He could be her boyfriend, ex-husband, or someone she met at work.”

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According to Health Department research, survivors of rape and sexual assault often experience an array of chronic physical and psychological symptoms over time. These include depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, sexually transmitted infections and a reduced quality of life. Many survivors wait a year or more to report their assault.

The \$300,000 campaign is fully funded through a Rape Prevention Education Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It includes broadcast, print and outdoor media advertising. Samples of the print and broadcast media are available on-line at [www.rapenomore.com](http://www.rapenomore.com).

DHMH provides funding assistance for rape prevention education to the 18 rape crisis centers located throughout the state. Department research indicates an estimated one out of every eight adult women living in Maryland has been raped sometime in her lifetime.

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