

# COMMON THREADS

Spring 2020



*In this issue...*

## I Ask

*Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2020*



### **Sexual Assault Awareness Month – I Ask**

- *Put Your Consent Skills to the Test*
- *Guide to Talking to Your Children About Consent*



### **Warning Against “at home” Rape Kits**



### **Survivor Online Support Groups**



### **Housing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Awareness**



**A WAY OUT**



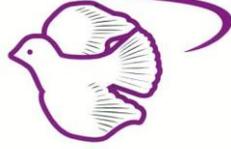
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

24 Hour Helpline (814) 274-0240 or Toll free (877) 334-3136

[www.myawayout.org](http://www.myawayout.org)



## A WAY OUT



*We are here.*

*As the situation with the COVID-19 virus evolves, we want you to know that our office is still open and we are still providing services to those in need. We will continue to assist with court related issues and our hotline is still being manned 24/7.*

*We are practicing social distancing and taking appropriate precautions to protect our clients and staff from potential infection.*

*If at all possible, please call prior to coming in to the office (274-0368) so we can take whatever special actions necessary to meet your needs during this time.*

*- David Hyde, Executive Director*

## **Mission Statement**

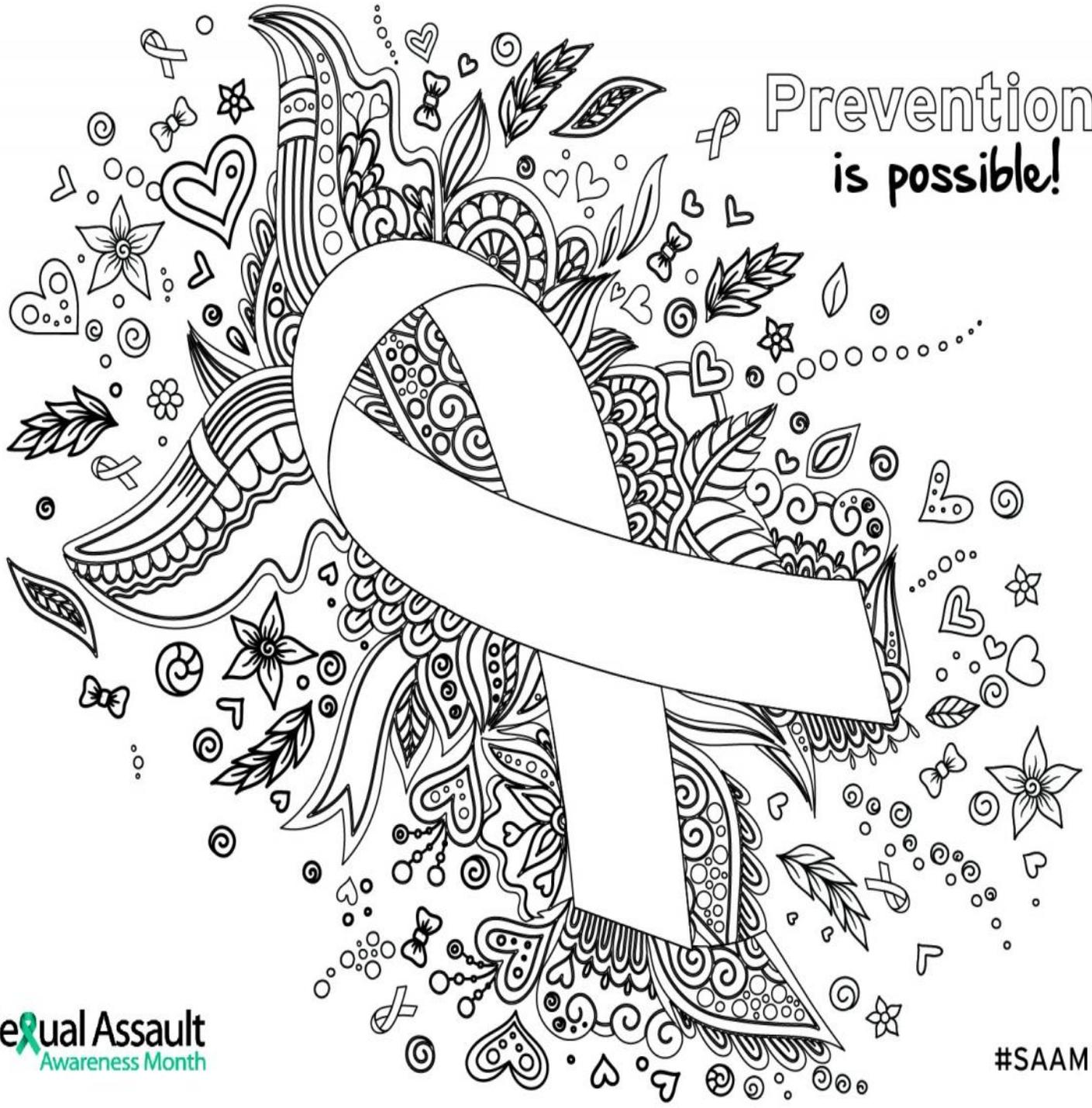
**The mission of A Way Out is to assist and support all victims, survivors, and families of domestic violence and sexual assault through ethical, culturally competent, and compassionate services.**

**We advocate for social change designed to end the cycle of abuse through dedication, community involvement and education.**

*April is*  
**Sexual Assault  
Awareness Month**



Prevention  
is possible!





## PUT YOUR CONSENT SKILLS TO THE TEST

**1. You should ask for consent before:**

- a. Holding hands
- b. Kissing
- c. Having sex
- d. All of the above

**2. Consent only applies to sex.**

- a. True
- b. False

**3. When should you ask for consent?**

- a. Before any type of touch
- b. Only right before sex
- c. Just the first time you have sex with someone
- d. When you feel like the moment is right

**4. Who should ask for consent?**

- a. People hooking up for the first time
- b. A couple in a long-term relationship
- c. Married couples
- d. All of the above



**5. When having a conversation about sex, you can talk about:**

- a. Protection
- b. Previous experiences
- c. What you like or don't like
- d. All of the above

**6. Consent is only verbal; body language and tone don't matter.**

- a. True
- b. False

**7. What clues help you determine if you have someone's consent after you've asked them?**

- a. Their words
- b. Their body language
- c. Their tone of voice
- d. All of the above



**8. If a partner responds, "I guess," or "If you want to," this could mean:**

- a. They don't feel comfortable directly saying "no"
- b. They really want to do what you suggested
- c. They might feel pressured or unsure
- d. Both A and C
- e. All of the above

**9. If you've asked for consent but you aren't sure if your partner is into what you've suggested:**

- a. Respect their answer and do something else
- b. Ignore them
- c. Ask them again later
- d. Try and convince them to say yes

**10. Once you've both consented, you can still tell your partner...**

- a. If you would like to stop
- b. If you need a break
- c. What you're into and not into
- d. All of the above





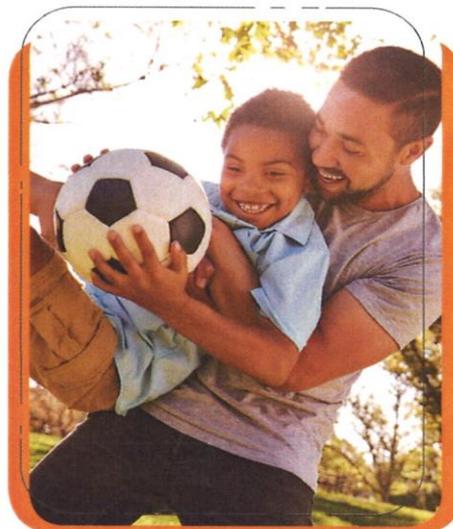
SAFE SECURE KIDS.ORG



## GUIDE TO TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT CONSENT

The idea of talking to your kids about consent can be uncomfortable or overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be! At this age, we want to lay the foundation for setting boundaries, making decisions about their bodies, asking for permission, and responding appropriately when someone says no to them. These conversations empower kids to confidently make decisions about their bodies, feel comfortable talking to you about these topics, and ultimately make it less likely that they will become victimized.

There are many types of scenarios and interactions that are already occurring in your child's life when it comes to the topic of consent. Use these interactions as conversation starters or teachable moments. The following examples are just a few different opportunities that you could use to begin – or continue – talking to your child about consent.



### ♥♥ OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONVERSATION ♥♥

**Remember:** Having these conversations is not just a one-time event. Use this guide to help you continue having important conversations with the kids in your life. These discussions are an essential part of a child's development.



#### OPPORTUNITY #1 YOUR CHILD IS SAD THAT THEIR FRIEND DIDN'T WANT TO SIT NEXT TO THEM ON THE BUS

We want to encourage children to accept a no answer, but we can also understand the sad or upset feelings that might come along with hearing "no" and help them to deal with those hard feelings in a positive way. You might say something like this:

- ♥ "I'm proud of you for respecting your friend's answer and choosing another seat. That shows that you care about your friend."
- ♥ "It seems like you're sad, I can understand that. It can be hard to hear a friend or someone we love tell us no."
- ♥ "What do you think you could do with your sad feelings? What would make you feel better?"



## OPPORTUNITY #2 YOU'RE WATCHING TV AND A TEACHABLE MOMENT PRESENTS ITSELF

This could be content about violence, bullying, substance abuse, or a sexual situation. When this happens, it's a great time to either pause the show or talk to your child afterwards about what you just saw. Here are some questions you can ask to start the conversation:

- ♥ "If you were in that situation what would you do? What would you say?"
- ♥ "I hope you know that you could always talk to me if that ever happens to you or if you have any questions about a situation like that."



## OPPORTUNITY #3 YOU'RE PLANNING A SURPRISE PARTY FOR A FRIEND

You have instructed your child to keep the surprise a secret. Language around surprises and secrets can be tricky with kids because you don't want them to keep secrets from you if they're being hurt in any way. Here's a way to help differentiate surprises and secrets:

- ♥ "Surprises are happy things that eventually everyone knows about. Our family doesn't keep secrets because they can hurt other people."



## OPPORTUNITY #4 YOU ARE A TEACHER IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

There has been an increase in problems with students taking belongings from others without asking. You might address this behavior in the classroom by having a conversation about consent:

- ♥ "In this classroom we show respect and care for each other. When we want to use something that belongs to someone else or someone else is currently using, it's important to ask for their permission."
- ♥ "If they say no, we need to listen to their answer, even if that makes us feel sad or mad. We should not take it from them without their permission."
- ♥ "You can always come to me if you need help asking for permission."



## OPPORTUNITY #5 YOU'RE LEAVING A FAMILY EVENT AND GRANDMA IS ASKING YOUR CHILD FOR A HUG GOODBYE

The child is avoiding grandma and hiding behind you. This is a conversation you might want to have with other adults in your life so that they understand the importance of respecting children's boundaries. You might say something like this in the moment:

- ♥ To Grandma: "It looks like someone doesn't feel like giving hugs today. Some days we like hugs and other days we don't and that's okay. We never have to give hugs to anyone."
- ♥ To your child: "We all show our respect and love in different ways. How would you like to say good-bye to Grandma today?" Provide your child with options like a high five, a wave, or simply saying "goodbye."

Remember, it's OK if you don't have all the answers! If you are unsure of something, feel free to let the child know that you will get back to them. Then, take some time, talk to other people, and/or access resources. A great place for resources on this topic is at [SafeSecureKids.org](https://www.SafeSecureKids.org).



## Warning against “at-home rape kits” issued again

*PCAR has become aware that a company called Preserve Kits is doing some marketing again of their “at-home sexual assault evidence collection kit” as a safer option for sexual assault survivors during COVID-19. The original concerns about at-home collection kits still stand and are outlined in the attached PCAR press release from 2019.*

### At-home rape kits leave victims without services and pathways to justice

HARRISBURG—The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape **does not** support the use of at-home rape kits following a sexual assault.

After an assault, it is important survivors consider seeking medical attention and understand the potential risks associated with the use of at-home kits.

Specially trained health care providers at hospitals across the Commonwealth are prepared to examine victims following an assault and care for their immediate safety. They conduct a forensic exam at no cost to the survivor, collect evidence, and screen for and treat sexually transmitted infections and other possible injuries. Those who would use at-home kits would also forgo the on-site assistance of a rape crisis center counselor. Counselors provide support during the forensic exam and long-after. They are confidential, trained professionals who help the survivor understand their legal options and support them in navigating their healing process.

An at-home rape kit cannot prevent pregnancy, identify or treat potential physical and mental health issues. It is highly unlikely the at-home kit collection would align with Pennsylvania’s legal requirements. This would jeopardize the victim’s ability to see the evidence used in criminal proceedings to hold the offender accountable.

The Sexual Assault Testing and Evidence Collection Act dictates the specific requirements associated with sexual assault evidence collection and testing in Pennsylvania. It is critical that evidence be collected, tested, and preserved in compliance with this Act. At-home kits would not comply with current law. According to this Act, evidence must follow the chain of custody and be picked up by law enforcement from health care facilities within 72 hours of being collected through the forensic exam. Law enforcement must submit evidence to approved laboratories within 15 days, with the victim’s consent. Labs must test kits received by law enforcement with jurisdiction over the crime. Such laboratories are approved by the Department of Health.

It is highly unlikely that at-home evidence would be admissible to labs or courts of law throughout the Commonwealth—doing a great injustice to victims and survivors of sexual harassment, abuse, and assault. For these reasons, PCAR does not support at-home rape kits. We strongly caution against this product, which is clearly not aligned with best practices or pathways to justice and safety for the Commonwealth. For more information on the services available to victims after a sexual assault, visit [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org) or call your local rape crisis center.

#### About PCAR:

*PCAR works to end sexual violence and advocates for the rights and needs of sexual assault victims. We partner with a network of rape crisis centers to bring help, hope, and healing to people in all of the Commonwealth’s 67 counties. Last year, rape crisis centers provided services to approximately 30,000 victims. Each year, rape crisis centers teach over 300,000 Pennsylvanians how to stop sexual violence in their communities. Over 50,000 professionals are trained by rape crisis centers to enhance the Commonwealth’s systemic responses to victims.*



## **SURVIVOR ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS**

***While you're social distancing and staying at home, you can still get support and encouragement.***

***Need someone to talk to who knows what you're going through?***

**Peer support can be a great tool for helping survivors find their way through the recovery process.**

**On our webpage at [www.myawayout.org](http://www.myawayout.org), you can select from a wide range online support sites that focus on specific needs and circumstances. On these sites you can participate anonymously and find support and encouragement with other survivors.**

**Go to the tab at the top of the page and click on SURVIVOR ONLINE SUPPORT to look for an online support group that might be helpful to you.**

### **Our donation wish list for our client families...**

Thanks so much to all who have been bringing donations to us during this time. Your support means so much to our clients and their families.

Out of an abundance of caution to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we are limiting donations to only new cleaning and personal care items, and packaged food items during this time. These include:

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Disinfecting spray cleaners    | Toothbrushes                   |
| Disinfecting wipes             | Toothpaste                     |
| Hand sanitizer                 | Baking Soda                    |
| White Vinegar                  | Feminine hygiene products      |
| Deodorant – men's and women's  | Tissues                        |
| Paper towels                   | Toilet paper                   |
| Spray disinfectant             | Dryer sheets                   |
| Laundry pods or small bottles  | Diapers / Pull-ups – all sizes |
| Baby wipes                     | Instant oatmeal                |
| Peanut butter                  | Ramen noodles                  |
| Instant Cup 'O noodles or soup |                                |

# know the signs

## OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION:

REFUSAL TO RENT OR SELL  
DIFFERENT TERMS + CONDITIONS  
FALSE DENIAL OF AVAILABILITY  
STEERING

*based on*

RACE  
COLOR  
RELIGION  
NATIONAL ORIGIN  
SEX  
FAMILIAL STATUS  
DISABILITY

+

SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
REFUSAL TO ALLOW A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION  
OR MODIFICATION



Take our assessment at  
[fhlaw.org/fair-housing-rights/assessment](http://fhlaw.org/fair-housing-rights/assessment)  
to see if you qualify for free legal services



# SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOUSING IS ILLEGAL

EVEN IF YOU SAID “YES.”  
EVEN IF YOU HAVE A CRIMINAL HISTORY.  
EVEN IF YOU HAVE BEEN EVICTED.  
EVEN IF YOU WERE BEHIND ON YOUR RENT.



If you've been sexually harassed by your landlord, rental manager or anyone else with control over your housing, call the Fair Housing Law Center at 877-725-4472 or visit [www.fhlaw.org/report-housing-discrimination](http://www.fhlaw.org/report-housing-discrimination).

 Like us on  
**Facebook**  
[@fairhousinglawcenter](https://www.facebook.com/fairhousinglawcenter)



## PLEASE NOTE...

**During this time when we are all staying at home to stay safe, contact service providers by phone before traveling to their location to find out their social distancing procedures.**

### ➤ **FOOD BANKS:**

**Coudersport** / Alliance Church 814-274-8661

**Austin** / Methodist Church 814-544-8740

**Ulysses** / Zion Christian Assembly 814-848-7407

**Galeton** / St. Paul Lutheran Church 814-435-2471

**Shinglehouse** / Methodist Church 814-697-6191

**Roulette** / Methodist Church, call Boro Office at 814-544-7459

➤ **AA online meetings** - [https://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/options-for-meeting-online](https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/options-for-meeting-online)

➤ **Al-Anon online meetings** - <https://www.ola-is.org/>

➤ **NA online meetings** - <https://virtual-na.org/>

Additional phone numbers for local services and resources are listed on our website under the LOCAL RESOURCES tab. Our website is [www.myawayout.org](http://www.myawayout.org)

We are providing updates and other information via our Facebook page and Instagram as well.

**A WAY OUT**



Be sure to LIKE us on Facebook and watch for upcoming events and fundraisers!



*Closed Office Holidays for 2019-2020:*

April 10<sup>th</sup> – Good Friday

May 25<sup>th</sup> – Memorial Day

July 3<sup>rd</sup> – Independence Day

September 7<sup>th</sup> – Labor Day

November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day

November 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving

December 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> – Christmas

December 31<sup>st</sup> & January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 – New Years

*If you need assistance outside of regular business hours or on a holiday, you can call the 24 hour Helpline at 814-274-0240 or toll free at 1-877-334-3136.*

Regular office hours are 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday  
814-274-0368

Our **COMMON THREADS** newsletters are also available at [www.myawayout.org](http://www.myawayout.org) under the **A WAY OUT SERVICES** tab in PowerPoint format.