



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00802
340-774-0001

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

A PROCLAMATION

The American Medical Association has stated that a "woman is raped every 46 seconds in the United States". Women, children, and men are all victims of sexual assault and it is estimated that one in three women, one in four girls, one in six boys, and one in 11 men will be victims at least once in their lifetimes. Rape and sexual assault impact women, children and men of all racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Women, children, and men suffer multiple types of sexual violence including acquaintance rape, stranger rape, sexual assault by an intimate partner, gang rape, incest, serial rape, ritual abuse, sexual harassment, child sexual molestation, prostitution, pornography, and stalking. In addition to the immediate physical and emotional costs, sexual assault may also have associated severe and long-lasting consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, major depression, homelessness, eating disorders, and suicide.

Child abuse prevention must be a priority to confront the reality that one in six boys and one in four girls will experience a sexual assault before the age of 18. Young people experience heightened rates of sexual violence, and youth ages 12-17 were 2.5 times more likely to be victims of rape or sexual assault. Prevention is possible when everyone gets involved. On campuses across the nation, one in five women and one in 16 men are sexually assaulted during their time in college. The first step is increasing education, awareness, and community involvement, it is time for all of us to take action to create a safer change for the future. The Family Resource Center of St. Thomas and St. John received approximately 200 cases of sexual assault and or rape within the last year. Of these cases, 50% of them involved children.

The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified sexual assault as a significant, costly, and preventable health issue. A coalition of rape crisis centers and their allies, known as the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council, has emerged to directly confront this crisis with the cooperation of law enforcement agencies, churches, health care providers, and other helping professionals from the Virgin Islands' diverse communities. There are rape prevention and education efforts underway throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands to challenge the

societal myths and behaviors that perpetuate rape and to engage communities in a common goal of ending sexual assault.

The Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council and its Territorial partners have established a Territorial Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to provide training, education, policy reform and awareness resources that are available to professionals and the community.

It is crucially important to hold perpetrators responsible for sexual attacks, and to prevent sexual violence at every opportunity. It is our responsibility to support rape survivors by treating them with dignity, compassion, and respect. It is important to recognize the compassion and dedication of the individuals involved in this effort, applaud their commitment, and increase public understanding of this significant problem. It is important to recognize the strength, courage, and challenges of the victims and survivors of sexual assault and their families and friends as they struggle to cope with the reality of sexual assault. It is important to recognize that not all victims of sexual assault survive, either at the time of the assault or later, due to the horrific long-term trauma that sexual assault often inflicts upon victims.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Kenneth E. Mapp, Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, do hereby proclaim the month of April 2017 as *Sexual Assault Awareness Month*. I join advocates and communities across the Territory in taking action to prevent sexual violence.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States to be affixed at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, this 25th day of April, 2017, A.D.





Kenneth E. Mapp
Governor

Attest:



Osbert E. Potter
Lieutenant Governor