CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

COMMUNITIES START BY BELIEVING

Most victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse do not report the crime. Many never tell anyone. Then because so few assaults are reported – and most perpetrators walk free – survivors don't get the help they need or the justice they deserve.

> "I just feel guilty for having any feelings when I'm not sure what really happened. All these years it's haunted me. I was 16, now 30, and wasn't sure what to do because I didn't know what they really did to me. How can I know when I was unconscious? Afterwards, all I could think of was what happened – was I raped? No one believes me and thinks that I should just shrug it off. How can I make anyone believe me?

It's time to end this cycle of silence. Your community can take the lead.

END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

Start by Believing

CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

WHAT IS START BY BELIEVING?

Start by Believing is a public awareness and action campaign designed by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) to end the cycle of silence and change the way we respond to sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse. Since its initial launch in 2011, thousands of people around the world have made their own personal commitment to Start by Believing. This includes people like you.

> My name is Tyler, and I'm pledging because I have met and known a few survivors, some of whom I was close with as a friend. It broke my heart knowing they underwent such a tragic event. I could see, even behind a brave face, they were still hurting (even if it was years behind them). No one should ever have to go through that. My heart goes out to all survivors of sexual assault.

> My name is Kat. I am pledging because one of my loved ones is a survivor, and I have seen the impact of a negative and a positive response. I want to do all I can to spread awareness of a positive response and knowledge that there is support and hope through it all.

> I am Sabrina, and I am pledging because I have friends and family members who didn't tell anyone after they were sexually assaulted, and they lived with the trauma inside their lives. I also personally experienced sexual harassment at work and was shocked at how people responded with disbelief and victim blaming. We have to do better.

Yet Start by Believing is more than just a personal pledge. It encourages individuals, organizations, and communities to communicate the critical message to survivors: "We hear you, we support you, and we will Start by Believing."

Equally important, Start by Believing equips communities to respond competently and compassionately to survivors and their loved ones. In other words, Start by Believing is not just a set of words, or a personal pledge that individuals can take. A Start by Believing program can help community organizations translate the philosophy into victim-centered and trauma-informed policies, protocols, and everyday practices.

By transforming personal and professional responses, we can help victims pursue justice and healing.

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WHY IS THE PLEDGE IMPORTANT?

Decades of research demonstrate that victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse are often doubted or blamed, and these negative responses have many harmful effects. Negative responses also decrease the likelihood that victims will report the crime and reach out for help. You may have witnessed this firsthand.

> "I was 7 and had a voice no one would listen to. When they did listen, they blamed it on my wild imagination. (What 7-year-old imagines the horrors I went through?) I'm 34 now, and I am not just a survivor of rape and sexual assault. I am an advocate for little voices and the voices that are talked over.

This is why the message of Start by Believing is so vital – outcomes will only change when survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse receive supportive responses to their disclosures. "When you tell us you've been hurt, we will believe you. We will get you the help you need. We will help you seek justice."

TAKE THE PLEDGE

Where should you start? By making your own personal commitment to Start by Believing.

- ☑ I pledge to Start by Believing when someone tells me about their sexual assault or abuse.
- ☑ I pledge to help survivors on the road to justice and healing.
- ☑ I pledge to end the cycle of silence.

PLAN YOUR NEXT STEPS

After you've taken your own personal pledge, it's time to get others on board and plan your next steps. The first is likely to be a brainstorming session. Figure out what you want to accomplish and evaluate what resources are available in your community to help get you there. Here are a few questions you might consider:

- Who are the key community members you want involved?
- Who will provide leadership for the campaign?
- Who will contribute support?
- What is the scope of your campaign?
- What do you want to accomplish?
- How will you market the campaign?
- Will you use social media?
- Will you work toward a city or state proclamation?
- What is your target launch date?

There are no right or wrong answers, so you can use these questions to guide your own individualized approach.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

With the freedom to build your own Start by Believing campaign, no two initiatives look exactly the same. We are amazed by the creative ideas communities come up with! But here are some common elements we often see.

Campaigns get their spark from inspiration. For example, after hearing about the Start by Believing campaign at EVAWI's annual conference, members of the Denver Police Department were motivated to bring the message home. With the goal of making the campaign as inclusive as possible, a team immediately went to work to secure partnerships that galvanized Denver city government, and the entire community, to Start by Believing. You can do the same. Be the one who inspires your community to take action.

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Campaigns need a range of perspectives. It's important to bring a diverse group of community leaders to the table to achieve success. Key players often include: law enforcement, victim advocates, health care providers, prosecutors, and social service agencies. Depending on your focus, you may also consider bringing in local colleges or universities, military installations, tribal governments, local businesses, and more. Also consider reaching out to policy leaders, including your Mayor, County Administrators, state legislators, etc. Use the Start by Believing video to introduce the philosophy of the campaign and the Start by Believing webinar with survivor stories to bring the message home.

Campaigns use a variety of strategies. Some campaigns have access to professional marketing services and traditional media outlets, but others do not. Take a look at the people who are actively involved in your community and make the best use of their specific skills and resources. And don't re-create the wheel! Hundreds of communities have already been in your shoes – you can build on their successes.

Many campaigns launch in April, as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). You can launch your campaign whenever you want, but it can help build on the momentum of SAAM in April. We also encourage everyone to participate in Start by Believing Day, which takes place each year on the 1st Wednesday in April. It's gratifying to see the coordinated impact of Start by Believing activities across the country, and around the world, all in a single day.

Most campaigns use social media, because it is such a powerful tool for creating change. Social media helps you spread your message farther and faster, and it allows people across the globe to follow your efforts simply by using #StartbyBelieving. Post pictures of your events, upload videos, and share any media coverage you worked so hard to achieve. Not sure how to get started? Use our social media graphics and toolkit, and you'll be on your way.

READY, SET, GO!

When it's time to launch your campaign, we have all the tools you need. Visit the Start by Believing website for resources like a pledge placard, brochure, proclamation template, social media graphics, posters, and more.

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Start with your own organization. Whether it is your workplace, school, or faith community, get everyone involved to take the pledge. Take pictures with the pledge placard and post on social media. Don't forget to use #StartbyBelieving!

Metro East Every Survivor Counts
Belleville, Illinois

Create a committee to launch a Start by Believing campaign in your community. If you have a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) or a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Team, this is a great place to start.

Kick off your campaign with a press conference. Follow the example of Cambridge, Massachusetts whose campaign involved city officials, the local police department, and the rape crisis center, along with other members of their Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Their press conference highlighted how Start by Believing can make survivors feel, and how the approach dramatically changes the response survivors receive when they disclose.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Offer presentations for community organizations and groups. Use the Start by Believing research-based presentation to build your own PowerPoint slides, and begin your presentation by playing the Start by Believing video, which introduces the philosophy and offers inspiring examples of local initiatives. You can even show this free webinar: Start by Believing, a Tool for Prevention. Make sure to leave plenty of time for Q&A!

Display posters, fliers, and banners in areas where survivors and their loved ones will see them, including public spaces within your organization, at other locations throughout the community, and on websites. Create yard signs or work with local businesses to display a Start by Believing message on their marquee or sign.

Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia

Share on social media. Broadcast your community's commitment to Start by Believing survivors. Our social media toolkit and graphics were designed to help, and don't forget to use #StartbyBelieving to join the global movement.

YWCA
St. Louis, Missouri

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Use marketing connections to extend your reach. Billboards, yard signs, bumper stickers, cab toppers, public transportation vehicles, and bus shelters all provide excellent opportunities to reach the community with a Start by Believing message. Even if your marketing resources are limited, you may be able to elicit the support of someone in the community who is willing to donate time or advertising space.

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Victim Services Program Manistee, Michigan

Summit County, Ohio

Make a video to declare your commitment to Start by Believing, like they did in [Multnomah County, Oregon](). If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video will be worth so much more for supporting survivors!

Utah State University

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Set up a pledge station where people can learn about the Start by Believing campaign and make a personal pledge. Target different populations within the community, for an inclusive campaign that benefits all survivors.

Work with local policy leaders. Dozens of cities across the United States have formally declared themselves to be a Start by Believing City, and several states have made a similar commitment to proclaim themselves a Start by Believing State. Use this proclamation template to get started!

Mayor Sharon Weston Broome
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Partner with local businesses for unique opportunities. Look to creative examples like the partnership between Lutheran Community Services Northwest and Sweet Frostings Blissful Bakeshop in Spokane, Washington.

Sweet Frostings Blissful Bakeshop
Spokane, Washington

Get local media on board. Connect with local media outlets to promote your campaign efforts. Here are a few examples to get you motivated: Denver, Colorado, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Kansas City, Missouri.

Write a blog about your campaign, and include details on how to make the pledge to Start by Believing.

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Turn your city teal like Denver, St. Louis, and New York! Advocates reached out to local sports teams, City and County officials, and others to spread awareness of Start by Believing Day and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Empower Field
Denver, Colorado

Kosciuszko Bridge
New York, New York

The St. Louis Wheel
St. Louis, Missouri

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Reach a diverse audience. Display posters representing various communities to raise awareness of supportive responses to survivors. Feel free to add your organization's logo in the white space at the bottom. We also offer materials in Spanish (Start by Believing pledge placard, poster, and postcard) and Portuguese (pledge placard, poster, and postcard). Social media is a great way to connect with your virtual audience of diverse communities.

Need more support? Submit a request for technical assistance. Thank you for being a Start by Believing partner!

RESOURCES

EVAWI offers many training resources and videos to help you explain the Start by Believing philosophy. Feel free to use these materials to develop your own presentations, campaign materials, grant proposals, and more.

Training Bulletins

Improving Responses to Sexual Assault Disclosures: Both Informal and Formal Support Providers
Reviews the research on sexual assault disclosures and the responses survivors receive, then examines public awareness campaigns to prevent sexual assault and improve responses, including Start by Believing.

Start by Believing: Participation of Criminal Justice Professionals
Debunks the notion that criminal justice professionals' participation in Start by Believing compromises their ability to remain objective. While questions of bias are sometimes raised, this training bulletin offers arguments that can be used to explain the purpose of the campaign and defend the rationale for criminal justice participation.

Interviews with Victims vs. Suspects: Start by Believing and the Question of Bias
Examines the Start by Believing philosophy and its implications for victim and suspect interviews. The purpose is to explain what this philosophy does – and does not – say about how to approach sexual assault investigations.

Start by Believing to Improve Responses to Sexual Assault and Prevent Gender Bias
Examines questions that have been asked about the philosophy of Start by Believing, and other victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches. Criminal justice professionals are then prepared to respond to any defense cross-examination by explaining how a law enforcement investigation of sexual assault can remain unbiased.

Training Videos

Our Start by Believing video introduces the philosophy and offers inspiring examples of local initiatives.

A 10-minute training video created by the Denver Police Department can be used to train law enforcement.

A Start by Believing webinar features survivor stories to view the campaign through the lens of prevention.