



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION KIT

LAW ENFORCEMENT STARTS BY BELIEVING

Anyone can make a commitment to Start by Believing in their personal life. But for those working in the criminal justice system, some have questioned whether it is appropriate – if participating in the campaign might compromise the ability of law enforcement to remain objective and conduct a thorough, fair, and professional investigation. Others wonder whether it might potentially open them up to attack by defense counsel or even losing cases at trial.

We believe it is appropriate, and in fact, it is the starting point for a fair and thorough investigation.

“

My name is Patrolman Delgado. I pledge to Start by Believing and give support to victims of sexual assault to help end the silence and empower them to seek medical care and justice. As a law enforcement officer, my ultimate goal is to make every effort to preserve and protect human life. I pledge to always treat a victim with compassion and respect.

My name is Detective Richard Theberge. As a criminal investigator, I have seen firsthand the trauma that sexual assault survivors face after an assault and as they attempt to navigate their own pathway through the criminal justice system. I pledge to Start by Believing, to provide as much support for sexual assault victims as I can offer, and to seek justice for perpetrators of sexual violence, empowering sexual assault victims to help end their silence.



**Start by
Believing**



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Victims know when someone does not believe them, and this undermines the ability of law enforcement to conduct an effective interview. Without a good interview, there is little chance of successfully investigating the report, and ultimately holding offenders accountable. Start by Believing reverses this dynamic.

It is important to clarify that this does not necessarily mean saying the exact words, “I believe you” to victims. Instead, many law enforcement professionals use phrases like, “I’m sorry this happened to you.” The important issue is not the exact words that are used, but the fact that victims are treated with compassion and respect, and their reports are handled professionally and fairly – instead of communicating the message that they are not believed.

Want to learn more? Our [criminal justice toolkit](#) examines these questions in detail.

“ My name is Detective Nicolette Aponte. I am taking the Start by Believing pledge because victims deserve to be heard and supported and perpetrators need to be held accountable.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TAKES THE LEAD

We have all the tools law enforcement professionals need to launch a Start by Believing campaign. Visit the website for resources like a [pledge placard](#), [brochure](#), [proclamation template](#), [social media graphics](#), [posters](#), and more.

Start with your own law enforcement agency. Get everyone to take the pledge, including your Chief or Sheriff. When the message comes from the top, it trickles down into daily actions that have a powerful impact on the community.

Chief Ron Thomas
Denver Police Department



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Give a presentation to your agency's leadership or personnel. Use the Start by Believing [research-based presentation](#) to build your own PowerPoint slides, and begin your presentation by showing the [Start by Believing video](#), which introduces the philosophy and offers inspiring examples of local initiatives. This 10-minute [video](#) created by the Denver Police Department can also be used to train law enforcement on a Start by Believing approach.

Set up a pledge station where people can learn about the Start by Believing campaign and make a personal pledge.

Montclair State University
Police Department



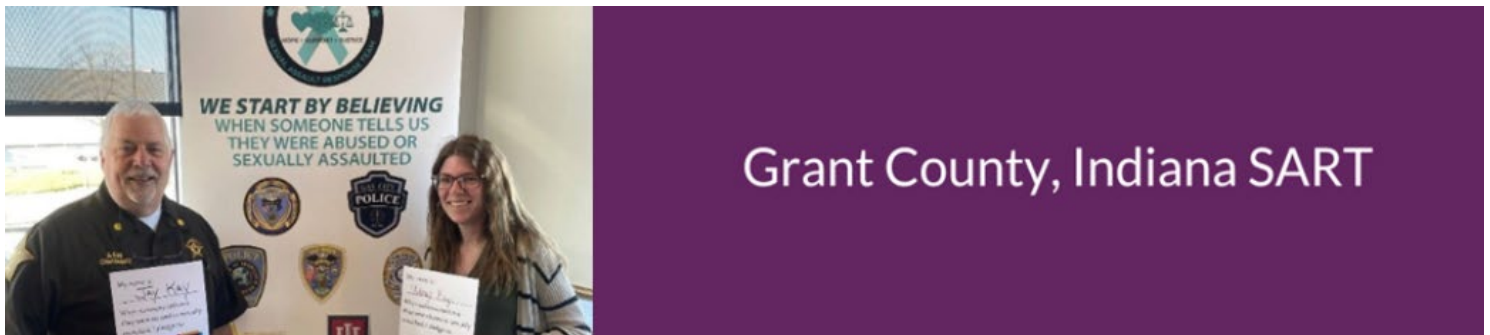
Challenge others to join your campaign. Get officers, investigators, dispatchers, civilian support staff, and others to join in pledging. Follow the example of Schenectady, New York and cover patrol cars with collected pledges!

Schenectady Police Department
Schenectady, New York



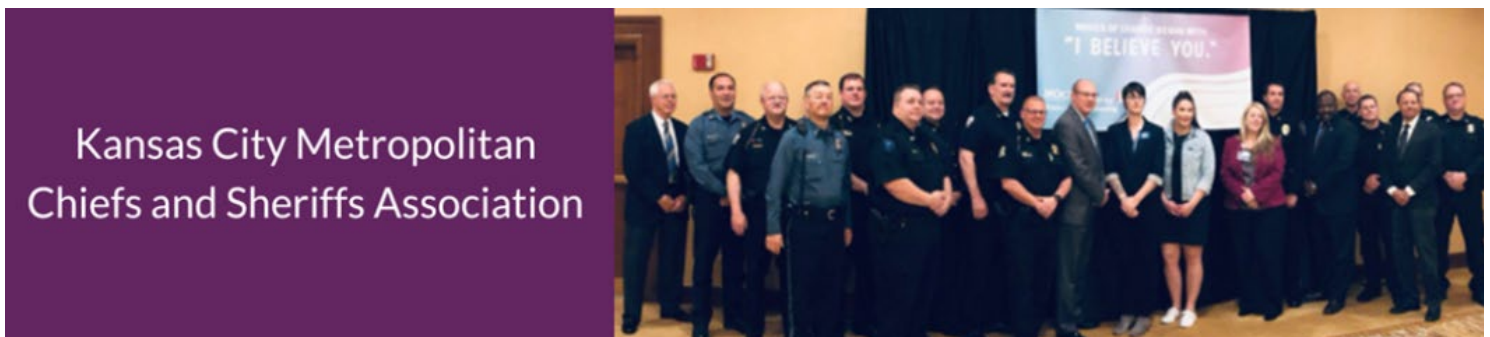
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Display posters, fliers, banners, signs, and bumper stickers where survivors and their loved ones will see them, including in front of your building, in the lobby or waiting area, in interview rooms, on patrol cars, and on your website.



Make a video to let victims know. “If you come to us with a disclosure of sexual assault, we will Start by Believing.” Follow the example of [this video for the public](#) created by Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, DC.

Connect with the Chiefs of Police Association. In Kansas City, reaching out to the Metropolitan Chiefs and Sheriffs Association paid off – 17 cities and counties formally proclaimed their commitment to Start by Believing.



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION KIT

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

Officer Briana Jackson
Virginia Commonwealth University
Police Department

"[Start by Believing] provides support for those involved by creating an open and unbiased environment."

-Ofc. Briana Jackson,
LGBTQIA Liaison Officer



Then take your campaign to the next level! Use our [campaign toolkit](#) for inspiration and creative ideas.

Need more support? Submit a request for [technical assistance](#). Thank you for being a Start by Believing partner!

