MILITARY ACTION KIT

THE MILITARY STARTS BY BELIEVING

Many military service members experience the trauma of sexual assault or domestic violence without ever speaking a word about it to anyone. They may not know where to turn, who will believe them, or how to get help.

When victims have the courage to tell someone about their abuse – whether it is a fellow service member, someone in their chain of command, a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or Victim Advocate (VA) – if their disclosure is immediately challenged with doubt or blame for their own actions, the survivor may shut down before fairly considering their reporting options. Or they may recant their report. This offers the military no opportunity to properly respond and investigate, allowing offenders to continue their abuse.

When we Start by Believing™ we create an atmosphere where victims receive the support they need to report their abuse and participate in an investigation. This increases the likelihood of a thorough inquiry and appropriate determination. It is the right thing do to for victims, and best for our nation's military.

> "My name is Natalie and I am stationed at Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia. I am pledging because I was a victim of domestic violence and because my abuser was so well known no one would believe me. I am pledging that I will always be a listening ear and I will always believe!

END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INTERNATIONAL™

Start by Believing™

MILITARY ACTION KIT

MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS TAKE THE LEAD

We have all the tools military service members 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.

> My name is Rosalie and I am in the military. Survivors of military sexual trauma already worry that no one will believe them, or that they did something to cause or deserve the assault. I want everyone to feel safe enough to report this crime, and to experience the validation that comes with another person saying, "I believe you," and "It wasn't your fault." That's why I Start by Believing.

> My name is Melissa, and I am the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in New Orleans. I am pledging because I support survivors and vow to create a safe space where the first words a survivor hears from me are "I believe you."

Start with your own command. Get everyone to take the pledge, including command leadership. When the message comes from the top, it trickles down into daily actions that have a powerful impact on the military.

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Give a presentation to active-duty members and command leadership. 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.

Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy

Display posters, fliers, banners, and signs where survivors and their loved ones will see them, including public gathering spaces, common areas, waiting areas, mess halls, fitness centers, bathroom stalls, and on websites.

Make a video to let victims know. "If you come to us with a disclosure of sexual assault, we will Start by Believing."

Set up a pledge station where people can learn about the Start by Believing campaign and make a personal pledge. Make sure to include not only military service members, but also their family members and other dependents.

Alaska National Guard

MILITARY ACTION KIT

Share on social media. Broadcast your installation'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.

Jeff Bryant
US Coast Guard

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!