

# we:advocate

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTER OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA, INC.

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Savannah Weaver  
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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic Violence will not just go away and it almost never gets better with time. In fact, it usually gets much worse.

- Approximately 96% of children are aware of the violence directed at their mothers.
- Children older than 5 or 6 have a tendency to identify with the aggressor and lose respect for the victim.
- In homes where partner abuse occurs, children are 1,500 times more likely to be abused. (Dept. of justice 1993)
- 40-60% of men who abuse women also abuse children. (American Psychological Assn. 1996)
- 63 % of all males between the ages of 11 and 20 who are serving time for homicide in America killed their mother's batterers.
- Every 9 seconds a woman is beaten by her partner or ex-partner.
- 95-97% of all domestic violence victims are women.
- 50% of all American women are likely to be abused by their partners in their lifetime.
- One woman is murdered by her current or former partner every six hours in the U.S. (according to FBI estimates).
- 80% of all battered women have been active in trying to get help.
- A married woman is five times more likely to be attacked by her partner than a total stranger.
- Arresting a batterer significantly reduces the chances he will repeat his offense.

The above information was obtained from [www.project-safe.org](http://www.project-safe.org).

## Cultural Competence and Diversification SACNEGA's Services

By: Savannah Weaver, Outreach Coordinator

*"They don't understand my culture, my issues," said Maribel Garcia, 40, who came to the United States from El Salvador 15 years ago and is now a legal resident. "I would rather wait and see a doctor on a visit to El Salvador than go through that difficulty."* Lynette Clemetson  
(article from *The New York Times*, 10/06/03)

Hispanic Heritage Month is nationally recognized on the dates of September 15<sup>th</sup>- October 15<sup>th</sup>. This year the Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia (SACNEGA) will be working to encourage dialogue in the Hispanic/Latino population about sexual assault awareness and its effects on individuals and communities. For this targeted outreach to be successful we must increase our knowledge and awareness of other cultures. SACNEGA is committed to serving all individuals and communities in our service area and We are working to enhance services for not only the Hispanic/Latino community but also the African American, elderly, and persons with disabilities communities.

The fundamental differences due to an individual's nationality, ethnicity, and culture, as well as family background and individual experiences may sometimes prevent an individual from seeking help for the trauma associated with sexual assault. In many communities there is a lack of awareness of sexual violence and community resources. In response to this, SACNEGA is building culturally competent awareness into its service delivery. According to the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC), cultural competence requires that organizations:

# WWE:respond

## Diversification, cont.

- Have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrates behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally;
- Have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities they serve.

SACNEGA's website is now available in Spanish, and SACNEGA will be doing presentations and reaching out to all communities about sexual assault. If interested in a presentation on sexual assault awareness in Spanish, please contact Savannah Weaver at [sweaver@sacnega.org](mailto:sweaver@sacnega.org).

## Outreach In Rural Communities

By: Natasha Murphy, Program Coordinator, Rape Prevention and Education

Over the past few months, SACNEGA has made important inroads in the rural community of Madison County, Georgia. The relationship between this County and the Center represents SACNEGA's ongoing commitment to cultural competency.

Victims of sexual violence who live in rural communities have historically had limited access to resources. Geographically victims living in rural areas are more vulnerable because there is a higher chance of living in isolation, without neighbors close by. Smaller municipalities often do not have the time, energy, or other resources to support victims. Quite often, victims will not report to the police out of fear of social repercussions. They or the perpetrator may know the responding officer or belong to the same congregation, social network, etc. Traditional ideas and attitudes about gender roles found frequently within rural communities also may affect an individual's decision whether or not to report.

For all of these reasons, outreach work in our rural counties requires knowledge of and sensitivity to each community's unique set of needs.

Madison County (pop. 25,730) has existed primarily as an agricultural community since its creation in 1811. The County's response to SACNEGA's outreach efforts shows a willingness to defy stereotypes about rural communities as well as a commitment to support victims of sexual violence and prevent perpetrators from victimizing. SACNEGA has been working with students at Madison County High School since October 2005. In addition to providing students with *Expect Respect* violence prevention curriculum presentations, SACNEGA has visited the school to speak with students and their parents about Prom Night and presented to the parents of incoming freshmen for the 2006-07 school year. SACNEGA is currently a member of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition alongside M.C.H.S., the Madison County Health Department, Department of Family and Children Services, and Family Connection. The Coalition is holding an information session for parents of Madison County students entitled, "Finding Words: How to talk to your kid about sex." The event will feature guest speaker Brian Rose from *Plain Talk* and is to take place on Thursday, November 2 in the Madison County Library Auditorium. There are two sessions – 5:30 and 7:00.

From Marital Rape: New Research and Directions by Raquel Kennedy Bergen with Elizabeth Barnhill (February 2006)

Approximately 10-14% of married women are raped by their husbands in the United States. Approximately one third of women report having "unwanted sex" with their partner. Historically, most rape statutes read that rape was forced sexual intercourse with a woman not your wife, thus granting husbands a license to rape.

# we:educate

## Being an effective advocate by confronting our own prejudices

April Ridgeway, Volunteer Coordinator

SACNEGA strives to provide our volunteers with the best education possible in order to be effective and empathetic advocates for survivors of sexual assault. Part of our training process involves an in depth exploration of our own biases and unintentional prejudices that may affect our ability to provide nonjudgmental support and aide to clients. It is important that we, as advocates, recognize our own ideas and opinions, so that we avoid projecting them onto survivors.

To do this, we must first recognize and come to terms with the stereotypes and expectations of others that we are ingrained with through parenting and socialization as children, and be wary of how societal norms and myths have shaped the way we communicate with and view people that may be culturally different from us. This includes a self discovery process by which we identify our own cultural beliefs and ideals, and how we relate them to others. For example, what ethnicity do we identify ourselves as? How do we identify people who share this ethnicity, and how do we identify those who are different? What language do we speak, and expect others to speak? What are some of our common medical practices (such as “feeding a fever” or “starving a cold”, or even what ailments we prefer to take to a doctor, and what ailments we prefer to treat on our own)? What religious beliefs and practices do we observe, and how much does it impact our other decisions in life? How do we feel about people who exhibit different beliefs and practices than we do, and how does this affect the way in which we treat them? Are we more likely to take shortcuts in explaining medical and legal processes and options if we feel the survivor won’t understand (because of disability or other assumption) or will take too long (because of language barriers or other perceived burdens)? Or, do we go out of our way to provide even more education and empathy to those culturally different than us; maybe we feel they must have missed out on certain important lessons in life because of their background (i.e. do we assume certain people must know certain things, and others do not, solely based on their cultural characteristics and stereotypes)?

Our own stereotypes and unintentional prejudices concerning different aspects of one’s cultural identification can indeed result in our ability to provide consistent and accepting advocacy to survivors if we are not aware of them and confront them within ourselves. I challenge you, members of our diverse community, to also confront your own attitudes and beliefs so that we may all provide the best care that we can to all who come to us looking for assistance or in need of a supportive friend. Leave your own influences at your doorstep, and set out into the world with a truly open hand.

Other tips on communication:

- Follow the lead of the survivor and reflect their use of language. Avoid using pronouns which assume gender, especially when referring to the perpetrator or significant other of the survivor, until he/she indicates such.
- Avoid being authoritative or commanding towards a survivor. Instead of telling them to do something (i.e. you must report to the police), ask them how they feel about it.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions if you don’t understand something or know what something is (such as slang terms or colloquialisms they may use). It is better to have clear communication than pretend to know something you don’t.
- Don’t use your own slang or professional jargon. Slang has different interpretations among different groups, and professional jargon presents distance between you and the survivor if they are not familiar with the language.

On July 5, 1993, marital rape became a crime in all 50 states, under at least one section of the sexual offense codes.

Project Safe is a local, non-profit organization that provides a safe Shelter, a 24-hour Hotline, Referrals and Support Groups for women, and their children, who are victims of domestic violence. Crisis hotline: (706) 543-3331

## CULTURAL BARRIERS AND REPORTING SEXUAL ASSAULT

Shannon Honey: Victim Advocate; Law Enforcement Liaison

Sexual assault/violence occurs across boundaries of race, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, economic class, religious affiliation, age and physical ability. It is important to be aware of the fact that each individual experiences sexual violence and the effects of that violence in a different way. Our society is a diverse one and we all have different life experiences that contribute to the way we understand the cultural construct of violence and to our likelihood to report violent crimes. With the constant presence of racism, cultural prejudice, sexism and ageism in our society, it is important to be aware of the issues that are relevant to specific groups that may prevent them from reporting sexual assault to or seeking aid from law enforcement.

All survivors of sexual assault experience barriers to reporting the crime to some degree. These obstacles include, but are not limited to: embarrassment, shame, blame for the assault that has occurred, fear of perpetrator retaliation, fear of revictimization from the criminal justice system and fear of what friends and loved ones might say about the assault. In some situations these fears are valid and justifiable. In concurrence with these hesitations, some people invariably experience reluctance to report based on group membership.

People of color may hesitate to report not just sexual assault, but any violent crime because of a mistrust of systems that have historically been used as tools of exploitation and oppression against them. These systems may expand to the social service arena as well as law enforcement. Individuals that identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) may be hesitant to report sexual assault due to perceived as well as real homophobia present in the criminal justice system. It is a common myth in our society that women do not sexually assault other women and that men cannot and do not experience sexual abuse from other men. LGBT survivors may not want to “come out” about their sexual orientation to law enforcement, medical professionals and sexual assault advocates in part because their orientation is a private and personal matter and in part because they may not have disclosed this information to their friends, family or coworkers.

Cultural, national origin and language barriers are also deciding factors in whether or not to report sexual assault. Women and men that originate from a culture other than that of the country in which they live have different social norms that govern the relationships between men and women and are fearful that these norms might not be understood by members of law enforcement or the medical and advocacy arenas. People who are not lawful residents may not be aware that they have the same rights as lawful U.S. residents that are victims of crime. Immigrants that are undocumented may be fearful of being deported. Deportation is a common threat that perpetrators use against their victims to keep them silent.

Non English speakers commonly have difficulty in finding interpreters in a timely manner to facilitate communications with law enforcement personnel, medical personnel and sexual assault advocates. As our society evolves, we see the emergence of a more ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse population. The need for qualified interpreters and bilingual staff members is a pressing one that is felt by all agencies that are working to better serve the diverse populations in their communities. Interpreters that have been trained on issues specific to sexual assault are the most effective method of communicating with non –English speaking victims.

In some instances, religion is used to justify physical and sexual violence within relationships. Sometimes women are taught to be submissive to their husbands. Also, divorce is considered sinful in some religions. Some women are afraid to report their husband’s commission of a sexual crime against them because of a fear of being ostracized from the religious community to which they belong.

Senior citizens who are survivors of sexual assault may think that law enforcement would not believe that someone in their age group would be a target for sexual assault or abuse. Often times the abuse is at the hands of a caregiver. There is a reluctance to report abuse or assault out of fear of losing their vital link with major care providers or hard earned independence. These same factors also affect persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities may be less able to articulate the assault or abuse. One of the main fears is that they will be considered less credible than the non-disabled person when they report a crime.

Reporting a sexual assault or violent crime is a personal and sometimes highly difficult decision. However, despite the many barriers to reporting, some survivors feel that reporting the sexual assault or other violent crime is an empowering experience that serves as an important step in regaining control of his or her life.

If there is anything incorrect in the address listed below, or if you would like your partner's or spouse's name listed in our database as well, please write to 133 and ask our Development Assistant. Thank you for your assistance in keeping our database current and accurate.

Phone: 706-546-1133  
 Crisis Hotline: 706-353-1912  
 Toll Free Hotline: 877-363-1912  
 www.sacnega.org

The Sexual Assault Center of  
 Northeast Georgia, Inc.  
 3019 Lexington Road  
 Athens, GA 30605

Non profit organization  
 U.S. Postage Paid  
 Athens, GA  
 Permit # 414

# We:need you

We are always looking for committed, mature volunteers for our 24-hour hotline. If you are interested in working to end sexual violence please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at (706) 546-1133.

We would like to thank some of our most significant donors from the past few months. Thank you all so very much. Your generous support makes our work here possible.



Please GoodSearch for us! It's simple. You use GoodSearch.com like any other search engine (they have partnered with the leading search engine to ensure the best results), but each time you do, money is generated for your favorite cause. Go to www.goodsearch.com and in the "I'm Supporting" toolbar type in "Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia, Inc." Now every time you search anything the Center will get money. It's an easy and free way for you to support us every day.

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## SAVE THE DATE

"Finding Words: How to talk to your kid about sex" - Thurs., Nov. 2 @ Madison Co. Library Auditorium. 5:30 & 7:00