

NEWS RELEASE

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ACTION & AWARENESS DAY FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT, CHILD ABUSE

BISMARCK – The reality of sexual assault and child abuse can be overwhelming, but talking about the devastating effects on victims, their families, and our communities is the first step to ending the violence. It's time to talk – to talk about how 90% of college students who are sexually assaulted on campus don't report the assault. It's time to talk about how one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18. But most importantly, it's time to talk about what we can do to help.

[CAWS North Dakota](#), the state dual sexual assault and domestic violence coalition, in partnership with [Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota \(PCAND\)](#), is hosting a [Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Action & Awareness Day](#) on Wednesday, March 27, 2013. The awareness day features informational displays from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. with a celebration of survival at 12 p.m. in Memorial Hall at the North Dakota state Capitol Building. Member organizations, community and state partners, and legislators have been invited to attend.

Governor Jack Dalrymple is scheduled to read the proclamations for Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month at 12:15 p.m. The celebration will feature a keynote address by Melissa Merrick, director of Spirit Lake Victim Assistance. Performances include Native American drum group Wise Spirit and jingle dress dancer Larissa Little Dove Fox, a Dorothy Moses Elementary 6th-grader. The teen performance group [The Group That Opened the Box](#) will also perform.

“Very few people have any intention of being abusive or neglectful of children,” said Tim Hathaway, Executive Director of PCAND. “Typically, abuse or neglect occurs when families are under stress and isolated from the community. This means the broader community is absolutely crucial in preventing abuse and neglect. We can no longer shake our heads and blame ‘bad parents’; we all have a role to play in nurturing healthy children and their families.”

The Action & Awareness Day will also feature a display of Clothesline Project t-shirts that bear witness to violence against women and children and the debut of CAWS North Dakota's upcoming campaign for Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month that spurs discussion about rape culture.

“Victim blaming is endemic in our society. The common conversation centers around ‘what they wore’ or how intoxicated a victim may have been as justification for a terrible crime,” said Janelle Moos, Executive Director of CAWS North Dakota. “We need to support victims by holding perpetrators accountable and one way we can do that is by speaking out against victim blaming statements. Sexual assault or abuse is never the victim's fault.”

Stickers and pins featuring the “Friends Don't Let Friends Blame Victims” slogan will be distributed at the event, with a digital toolkit rolling out as April approaches. For more information on the [Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Action & Awareness Day](#) or to request a campaign toolkit, email jweisgerber@ndcaws.org.

ABOUT CAWS North Dakota:

CAWS North Dakota is a membership organization representing the 21 domestic violence and sexual assault crisis centers throughout the state. It is the mission of CAWS North Dakota to provide leadership and support in the identification, intervention, and prevention of domestic and sexual violence. For more information, please visit www.ndcaws.org.

ABOUT Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota:

Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota is dedicated to strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect, particularly in North Dakota. Our organization was founded in 1978 and we are a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit organization and a chapter of [Prevent Child Abuse America](#). For more information, please visit www.stopchildabusend.com.