



April 29th is Denim Day, and the City of Milwaukee joins Denim Day Milwaukee in calling on community members to show their support for sexual assault survivors.

Denim Day is an international awareness campaign, which honors survivors of sexual violence and seeks to end victim blaming. It began in 1999, after an Italian woman was raped by her driving instructor. The perpetrator's conviction was overturned, with Italy's highest court reasoning that since the victim was wearing tight jeans, she must have helped her rapist remove her jeans, thereby implying consent. This ruling motivated women and men throughout Italy, Europe, and the United States to dedicate a day to wearing jeans, highlighting the misconceptions that surround sexual assault, and supporting survivors.

This year, Mayor Tom Barrett and Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, Dr. Darienne Driver, are co-chairing Milwaukee's Denim Day efforts to bring attention to the impact of sexual violence on youth. Sexual assault can affect anyone, however. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in five women and one in 71 men have been victims of rape in the United States. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that more than half of rapes and assaults go unreported. Why? What we hear over and over again from youth and adult victims alike is that they fear that they will not be believed or that they will be blamed.

Our goal is simple: To have the Milwaukee community stand together to change the conversation around sexual assault. Our focus is not on blaming victims, but on holding perpetrators accountable.

You can help. You can show your support for survivors of sexual assault.

- Attend the Denim Day press conference on Wednesday, April 29th, at 10AM in the City Hall Rotunda. Don't forget to sport your denim!
- Join the conversation on social media and use the *#denimdaymke* hashtag to share your thoughts and activities on Denim Day.
- Visit *denimdaymke.org* for materials, a calendar of events, and more ideas on how you can get involved.

We need your voice and commitment to raise awareness about sexual assault, increase our prevention efforts, and to build a community of support for survivors throughout Milwaukee.

FIND HELP

24-Hour Crisis Help Lines

Parent Helpline
(414) 671-0566

Safe Path
Questions about youth sexual violence
(414) 271-9523

Sexual Assault Treatment Center
(414) 219-5555

Services for Youth

Pathfinders
(414) 964-2565

Counseling

The Healing Center
For adult survivors of sexual assault
(414) 671-4325

Culturally-Specific Services

American Indian Task Force
(414) 651-6042

Asha Family Services
(414) 875-1511

Hmong American Women's Association
(414) 342-0858

IndependenceFirst
Assistance for victims with disabilities
(414) 291-7520

Latina Resource Center
(414) 389-6510

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center
(414) 271-2656

Sexual assault is when one person forces another person to do any sexual act without their freely given consent.

It can affect anyone, regardless of their age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. Perpetrators are frequently someone the victim knows; they can be friends, intimate partners, colleagues, neighbors, or family members.

FACTS AT-A-GLANCE

- Nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the United States have been raped at some point in their lives.
- 1 in 20 women and men have experienced sexual violence other than rape in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- 12.3% and 27.8% of female and male rape victims respectively were first assaulted, when they were age 10 or younger.
- A 2011 survey indicated that 11.8% of girls and 4.5% of boys from grades 9-12 report being forced to have sexual intercourse.

Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Sexual Violence Fact Sheet, 2012

Every survivor reacts differently. They may experience a range of emotions and reactions after the assault, including feeling disoriented, depressed, helpless, ashamed, angry, afraid, anxious, or alone. Difficulty concentrating or recalling information as well as changes in eating and sleep patterns are not uncommon. Victims of assault may engage in behaviors they would not usually do, such as isolating themselves or using alcohol and other drugs to cope.

Survivors need support and understanding. They need to know that they are not to blame, and the assault was not their fault. As a trusted contact, your response is important. There are steps you can take to support a loved one who has been assaulted.

- If you feel comfortable, you can offer to listen and support them, if they wish to talk about their experience. Assure them that they do not have to talk about the assault.
- Refrain from questions or statements that judge or blame their survivor: “What were you

thinking?,” “Why did you go there?,” “Why didn’t you try to get away?,” etc.

- Connect them with resources and let them know they have options. Survivors may seek medical services, report to law enforcement, pursue counseling and other support services, or simply engage in self-care activities on their own.
- Sexual assault is a crime which oftentimes leaves victims feeling powerless. Give the person space to make decisions about their own healing process. This empowers survivors and helps them reclaim control over their lives.

Family and friends are also encouraged to seek help, since they can experience “secondary victimization,” exhibiting some of the same emotions and reactions as survivors as a result of supporting someone who is recovering from the trauma of an assault. Local sexual assault service providers offer workshops and support groups for the loved ones of sexual assault survivors.

If you or someone you know has been assaulted:

- Confidential medical care is available through Aurora's Sexual Assault Treatment Center, which provides crisis counseling, STD testing and treatment, treatment of injuries, referrals for future care, and evidence collection.

For purposes of evidence collection, do not wash any body parts and avoid rinsing your mouth, brushing your teeth, or going to the bathroom until you have been seen at the Center. Preserve and do not wash any clothing you were wearing at the time of the assault as well as any sheets, blankets, or towels you had contact with during or after the assault in paper bags.

- To report a sexual assault to law enforcement, contact the Milwaukee Police Department (911).
- Reach out to one of Milwaukee’s many supportive agencies for advocacy and counseling services.
- Practice self-care and do things that you enjoy or are good for you.