

# Fall River Issues Proclamation for Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Month



*Throughout the month of April, the community is encouraged to take a stand against sexual assault and child abuse.*

Fall River Mayor Will Flanagan issued an official proclamation today, marking April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Month. Mayor Flanagan was joined by several partnering organizations including the Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County, The Women's Center, and the Fall River Police Department. Flanagan urged the community to work together to promote awareness of sexual assault and child abuse as it occurs in the community.

Fall River Police Chief Daniel Racine offered remarks, highlighting the efforts of the Children's Advocacy Center in their role assisting victims of child sexual assault. Racine attributed the agency's success to its use of "best practices"

in working with victims.

Michelle Loranger, Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Center, also spoke at the proclamation. "We know these issues happen year-round. 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be affected by abuse," she said. In her remarks, Loranger noted that Fall River refers the highest number of child sex abuse cases to the Children's Advocacy Center. However, while there has been an increase in case reportings, Loranger says that greater education has had the positive effect of promoting an increase in disclosures.

Loranger reminded attendees of the role that adults must adhere to. She says, "Child safety is the job of an adult. We need to be troubled that non-reporting and non-action by adults happens." Pamela Macleod-Lima, Executive Director of The Women's Center, mirrored Loranger's sentiments. Macleod-Lima urged attendees to talk about the issue to effect change. "Child abuse and sexual assault murders the souls of people... so let's talk about it. These issues happen in silence and perpetrators say 'don't tell anyone.' If we reinforce this silence, victims will not open up," said Macleod-Lima.

Additional remarks were also offered by the Silvia Rudman, Chief of the Special Victims Unit of the District Attorney's Office. Rudman also urged the community to spread the word, stating that continued partnerships, enhanced education, and an unrelenting pursuit of justice were the keys to reducing victimization.

Throughout the month of April, the community is encouraged to take a stand against sexual assault and child abuse, however real change requires effort year-round. Quoting Fred Rogers, Loranger ended her remarks with a powerful statement, spelling out the need for both an individual and collective commitment to change. "We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those

who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

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