



United to end sexual abuse,
assault, and harassment

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PUBLIC STATEMENT

When Abuse Is Organized Online, It Becomes a Public Safety Crisis

A growing network of digital spaces are normalizing sexual violence, demanding immediate action from policymakers, platforms, and communities.

HARRISBURG, PA – The recent investigation by CNN exposes a deeply disturbing and growing reality: sexual abuse is being organized, normalized, and monetized in online spaces designed to evade accountability.

What this reporting makes clear is that this is not isolated behavior. It is systemic.

Across hidden forums and mainstream platforms alike, perpetrators are using technology to share tactics, build community, and profit from abuse, including drug-facilitated sexual assault. Survivors are being harmed not only in private, but in environments where that harm is encouraged and amplified.

At Respect Together, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), and the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR), we are unequivocal:

Sex without consent is sexual assault.

Sex with someone who is unconscious, drugged, or unable to consent is sexual assault.

There is no gray area.

“The ways sexual abuse and assault are committed continue to evolve, but the harm is the same,” said Yolanda Edrington, CEO of Respect Together. “What we are seeing in these online spaces is not just disturbing, it is dangerous. When abuse is normalized, shared, and encouraged, it creates conditions where more people are harmed. We are all less safe as a

result. Survivors deserve better than a system that struggles to keep up. They deserve support, accountability, and action.”

This investigation also underscores a critical truth that advocates have long known:

Most often people who commit abuse are not strangers. They are partners. Spouses. People trusted with care and safety.

And too often, survivors face disbelief, stigma, and systemic barriers when they come forward.

We stand with survivors everywhere who have experienced this form of abuse, including those whose stories were shared in this reporting. We believe you. We see you. And we know that what happened to you is real.

This moment demands action:

- Technology platforms must be held accountable for hosting and enabling content that promotes sexual violence
- Law enforcement and healthcare systems must be better equipped to recognize and respond to drug-facilitated sexual assault
- Public understanding must shift to demand the role of consent is recognized and always respected in all relationships
- Sustained funding is essential so rape crisis centers can meet the growing and evolving needs of survivors

In Pennsylvania, our network of rape crisis centers provides 24/7 support, counseling, legal advocacy, and prevention education in every county. These services are a lifeline, and they must be strengthened, not strained.

Because survivors cannot wait.

Online or offline, sexual abuse is real, and its impact is devastating.

And we all have a responsibility to confront it.

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ABOUT RESPECT TOGETHER

Together with its main divisions, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) and the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR), Respect Together supports survivors, promotes research, identifies best practices, and shapes public policy. Our mission is to disrupt

inequity and mobilize service providers, communities, and leaders to create and uphold safe, equitable communities with a culture of respect for all people.

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