

March 17, 2013



STEUBENVILLE RAPE TRIAL VERDICT

2 teen football players found delinquent in Steubenville rape case

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) support Judge Lipps's decision of finding two male juveniles delinquent of rape and one of them delinquent for illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material. It is a decision that we believe is just and sets the tone for how future drug-facilitated sexual assaults will be prosecuted. The outpouring of support for this victim illustrates that it's time to break the silence. Offenders can and will be held accountable. The judge's decision shows crimes of sexual violence will not be tolerated.

We thank the victim for coming forward and displaying an incredible amount of strength and courage. Her bravery opened the door for other victims to report and be believed and supported. We also thank prosecutors Marianne Hemmeter and Brian Deckert, the Ohio Attorney General's office, law enforcement and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification for their diligence in seeking justice.

While this case has garnered worldwide attention focusing on Steubenville, we know that these crimes happen everywhere and far too often. In Ohio, 60% of sexual assault victims reporting to law enforcement are juveniles¹. Nationally, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by the time they turn 18 years old². As we've seen in this case, victims experience many barriers when disclosing abuse. These barriers contribute to victim and societal silence of sexual violence. When someone discloses what happened, believe them.

Throughout this case, we saw many missed opportunities where others could have intervened but did not. In a **study released this week** about teens' knowledge of dating violence and sexual assault, conducted by GfK Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, it revealed:

- 53% would find it difficult to intervene, and 40% wouldn't even know what to do if they witnessed such a crime.
- 62% percent of teens said they would be willing to help if they witnessed dating violence or a sexual assault, but only 46% percent of teen males thought they would recognize such a crime.

Technology was another key component in this case. Technology can facilitate sexually-violent acts before, during and after an offense. This case shined a light on the role that bystanders play in preventing these crimes and supporting survivors. We need to engage bystanders in preventing these crimes, by equipping them with knowledge and skills to safely, effectively intervene.

What happened in Steubenville can be a tipping point for change. We have to continue these conversations beyond the decision made in this courtroom today. Preventing sexual violence is possible, and through the community mobilization we must now focus our attention on improving policies, promoting training and investing in prevention.

¹ Snyder, H. N. (2000). *Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident and offender characteristics* (NCJ 182990). Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/saycrlr.pdf>
Ohio Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services, Ohio Incident-Based Reporting System. (2013). Retrieved from http://portals.ocjs.ohio.gov/oibrs_portal/faq.aspx

² Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 19-28. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(90)90077-7