



## April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

*Monarch Services Uses Digital Platforms to Promote Sexual Assault Awareness and Affirmative Consent*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Overview:

Today, April 1, marks the beginning of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), 1 in 3 female-identifying individuals and 1 in 4 male-identifying individuals have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes. Sexual violence is defined by the CDC as “sexual activity when consent is not obtained or not given freely.” In 2019, Monarch Services served 435 sexual assault survivors. While Monarch serves many survivors monthly, April is a chance for community members to proactively discuss sexual assault, demonstrate support for survivors, raise awareness and brainstorm prevention techniques. Sexual assault prevention requires the collective voice and power of individuals, families and institutions.

As part of the national 2020 [“I Ask” Campaign](#), Monarch Services joins the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#) in empowering individuals to put consent into practice. Although our community is taking preventative measures to [“flatten the curve”](#) and reduce the harm of [COVID-19](#), there are actions we can take remotely to engage the Santa Cruz County community in spreading awareness of the impact of sexual assault and steps we can take to prevent it. This year’s theme, [“I Ask for Consent”](#) builds on the idea that consent is a normal and necessary part of sex. During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Monarch Services will bring the theme of [“I Ask for Consent”](#) to life by sharing graphics, articles and resources encouraging and promoting affirmative consent. We also encourage community members to join us in wearing teal to show solidarity with survivors of sexual violence on April 2, [National SAAM Day of Action](#) and in wearing denim on April 29, [National Denim Day](#).

“During this unprecedented time, we are obligated to take action to keep our community safe,” Executive Director Laura Segura said. “While we are sheltering in place to maintain community safety, we feel it is vital to continue promoting consent and advocating against sexual assault digitally. Everyone has a role to play in the fight against sexual assault and we are here to help you determine yours.”

### Actions you can take to address sexual assault:

- Promote social norms that protect against sexual violence - end [rape culture](#)
- Be an active bystander when you see a potentially violent situation
- Create a culture of consent in your home and social circles
- Use social media to raise awareness among your peers
- Listen to and validate survivors of trauma

### About Monarch Services:

*Monarch Services has a 43-year history in Santa Cruz County of providing advocacy and resources to community members affected by violence. Services include court accompaniments, restraining order assistance, counseling, emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis line, outreach, education and support groups. Monarch Services is the only rape crisis and human trafficking center in Santa Cruz County and includes an emergency response team. All services are available in Spanish and English and are free or low cost.*