



April 2026 enCourage Newsletter

Dear Friends and Supporters,

After a community presentation a few years ago, a woman approached me. She was a bartender. One night after her shift, she'd driven a customer home because he was too drunk to drive — and he groped her in her car. She told me she'd never reached out for help because she didn't think what happened to her was bad enough to count as assault.

It was assault. And she's not alone in that doubt.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and this is what I most want people to understand: sexual assault rarely looks like what we see in movies and on TV. It's not usually a stranger in a dark alley. It's most often someone the survivor knows — a coworker, a friend, a family member, someone they trusted. And because the reality doesn't match the script we've been given, survivors frequently minimize their own experiences, talk themselves out of seeking help, and carry harm alone that they were never meant to carry.

Belief is one of the most powerful things we can offer. If someone in your life discloses a sexual assault — whether it happened last week or thirty years ago, whether it fits the "classic" image or not — the most important thing you can do is believe them. Tell them you believe them. Tell them it wasn't their fault. Tell them help is available if they want it.

And if you've experienced something that harmed you and you're not sure it "counts" — it counts. You don't have to meet a threshold to deserve support. Our advocates are here, and we believe you.

You can reach enCourage Advocacy Center 24 hours a day at (402) 463-5810.

We'll believe you. We're here to help.

Jo Bair, MSW



How can you exercise
leadership through
intervention without
dominating?



Act Safely, Make a Difference

Intervening safely is key to Green Dot's approach. You don't need to put yourself at risk—small, strategic actions can make a big difference. Creating distractions, calling for help, or alerting someone in authority are all effective strategies. This month, think about ways you can safely intervene in everyday situations—at work, school, or social events. Practicing these actions mentally or role-playing with friends can increase your confidence when real moments arise.

Remember, you don't have to be a hero; you just need to act thoughtfully and safely. Every safe action counts.

For questions or to schedule a Green Dot Training at your business or organization, email greendot@encouragecenter.org



Yes Means Yes

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It's a time to name something our culture has historically preferred to leave unspoken: that sexual violence doesn't only happen between strangers. It happens between people who know each other. People who are dating. People who are married. People who have said yes before.

And that's where a lot of confusion — and a lot of harm — lives.

There's a persistent myth that agreeing to a relationship means agreeing to access. That saying yes to a date, yes to a relationship, yes to marriage, means saying yes to physical, sexual, and emotional contact whenever the other person wants it. That prior consent is permanent consent. That love means availability.

It doesn't.

Consent isn't a door you open once. It's a conversation that happens every time — and one that either person can end at any point, for any reason, without explanation or apology.

Researchers and advocates use the acronym FRIES to describe what real consent looks like:

Freely given. Not extracted through pressure, guilt, threats, or wearing someone down. Consent given under coercion isn't consent — it's compliance.

Reversible. Anyone can change their mind at any time. A yes from last night doesn't carry over to this morning, and a yes given in the past can become a no in the present.

Informed. Both people understand what they're agreeing to. Deception — about intentions, about protection, about what's actually happening — undermines consent entirely.

Enthusiastic. The standard isn't the absence of a no. It's the presence of a yes. Silence, freezing, going along to avoid conflict — these are not consent.

Specific. Agreeing to one thing isn't agreeing to another. A yes to one act isn't a yes to everything. Every encounter is its own conversation.

If you're in a relationship where you feel unable to say no — where refusal leads to anger, punishment, guilt trips, or worse — that's both a consent problem and a safety problem. You deserve support, and you deserve a relationship where you feel safe, secure, loved, respected, and truly at home. Where you can name what you want and need — and what you don't — and trust that it will be heard.

If you're someone who has pushed past a partner's hesitation, interpreted silence as permission, or believed that commitment entitles you to access, what's being described here is sexual violence. That's worth facing directly and honestly. Real change requires more than good intentions. It requires a serious examination of how you think about partners, access, and entitlement — and a sustained, substantive commitment to doing things differently.

enCourage Advocacy Center is here for everyone navigating these questions. Rebuild DVIP can be the beginning of that serious work. Call us at (402) 463-5810.



- Wanting to volunteer at enCourage? If interested in volunteering, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.
 - We also always accept donations of clothing, household items, gently used toys, kitchen items, toiletries, size 3 and up diapers, laundry detergent, and unlocked, working cellphones.
 - We are currently looking for individuals who would be available to foster pets for survivors fleeing violence. If interested, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.
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Each Tuesday from 4:30 to 6 pm, enCourage hosts a peer support group. This group provides attendees with an opportunity to connect with other survivors. In this half-hour, we discuss current life happenings and identify ways to help one another. Then we switch gears from 5 - 6 pm into an educational group called Healthy Healing. Through this group, we discuss and practice new skills that help attendees recover and thrive after violence. We discuss what healthy relationships look and feel like. Learn healthy ways to manage obstacles and overcome the insecurities that develop from trauma and end the cycle of violence. Email jazmin@encouragecenter.org for questions or to let her know you would like to attend groups.



- Every Tuesday from 4:30 - 6 pm, we offer a Support Group at enCourage Advocacy Center and a Healthy Healing Educational Group from 5 - 6 pm.
- Each month on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 1 - 3 pm, the Nebraska Aids Project will be at enCourage Advocacy Center providing Free and Confidential HIV and STI Testing. Contact Heather for an appointment by emailing HeatherB@nap.org. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- We are currently having a shirt fundraiser with all proceeds going to support the general needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties. Here is the link to our No One Heals Alone shirt fundraiser. Orders will be accepted until April 19th, 2026.

<https://www.bonfire.com/no-one-heals-alone-encourage/>

