

Sexual Assault Awareness Week to educate the public

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This Monday marks the beginning of Sexual Assault Awareness Week.

Envision Counselling Support Centre is using the week to help educate the public.

"We have a little bit of a campaign and some awareness so we are setting up tables at the local libraries in Weyburn and Estevan," said executive director Christa Daku. She said they were also doing education in the schools. Sexual assault awareness week May 15 to May 19, as declared by provincial government.

"It's very common for words to be used that are derogatory in a sense that have become the norm over many, many years and we just want to acknowledge the culture around sexual assault. There's consent with stuff like that. It's important to know where the person you are saying it to will be accepting or not in any way. A lot of times, people don't take offense because it is normalized," she said.

Daku explained the education focuses on changing attitudes around sexual assault and consent, specifically around behaviours that are not always recognized as sexual assault.

One in three women and one in six men suffer some form of sexual assault and Daku said statistics in the southeast are consistent with those national numbers. Sexual assault encompasses more forms of aggression than some people may realize.

"It's not necessarily as serious as rape but it is a concern around unwanted touching, unwanted grooming - those types of things. Often times, people who are sexually assaulted, it comes from somebody we know," Daku explained.

She added that nobody is immune from sexual assault.

"One of the most common misconceptions around sexual assault is that when you are in an intimate partner relationship, so married or dating or living with somebody, that they have the right to have their needs met in that way whenever they feel like it. That's not necessarily so. It needs to be consensual even when it is in that sort of a situation."

Envision Counselling and Support Centre is receiving more calls for counselling in recent months according to Daku. She added that the number of people reporting to police aren't matching this spike with only one in 10 victims typically reporting.

"It's a very long process through the justice system and even if somebody doesn't want to go through that process, we really encourage they go through the healing process," said Daku.

The sexual assault program at Envision is run with funding from the Ministry of Justice but the education for Sexual Assault Awareness Week campaign is sponsored by Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan who also runs their own campaign every year.

Daku said anybody who may need help or wants to ask Envision a question, should visit their website.

