

Rape Crisis Center: Addresses statements made by MMSD Representative regarding the alleged rape at East High School

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(MADISON,WI) The Rape Crisis Center (RCC) is deeply troubled by statements made by Madison Metropolitan School District's Safety and Security Coordinator, Joe Balles, in regard to the alleged rape of a student by two boys at East High School. Statements like the one Balles made to Channel 3, including the phrase "kids will be kids," perpetuate a culture that facilitates violence, particularly sexual violence, in our communities. It is never acceptable to minimize any form of sexual assault. RCC Executive Director, Erin Thornley-Parisi, has spoken with MMSD Superintendent Jennifer Cheatham, and has been assured that Cheatham is taking the situation seriously and addressing Balles' comments publicly.

RCC staff is committed to serving students through on-site educational programming, Chimera® verbal and physical self-defense classes, RCC GameChangers youth advisory board, gender equity clubs in schools (including East High School), and through the provision of trauma-informed counseling services in schools.

The RCC will continue to work engaging administrators and policy-makers in school districts and in City, County, and State agencies to advocate for meaningful change that will increase safety in our community. The Rape Crisis Center would welcome the opportunity to be included in any further conversations MMSD should have regarding ways to minimize sexual violence in the school district.

“The media informs the public about sexual violence in our community, and so it’s important that when representatives from our schools speak, they avoid blaming or avoidance statements like the one made by MMSD’s Joe Balles,” said Thornley-Parisi. “We must work together to end rape culture.”

The RCC encourages victims and survivors of sexual violence, or those offering support to these individuals, to call the 24-hour helpline. English speakers can call 608-251-7273, and Spanish speakers can call La Línea de Ayuda at 608-258-2567.