

# Dept. of Military Affairs: National Guard commemorates Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month

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by Staff Sgt. Katie Theusch

Wisconsin National Guard Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program staff and victim advocates set up teal pinwheels outside the Joint Force Headquarters building in Madison representing service members who experience sexual violence in observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

Each April Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention month serves as an opportunity to increase awareness of the continued pervasiveness of sexual assault and sexual harassment in our society and within the military, as well as the strength and courage it takes for survivors to come forward.

“My number one priority as it relates to sexual assault and harassment is to ensure we create a culture in the Wisconsin National Guard where everyone feels comfortable coming forward to report inappropriate activity,” said Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin’s Adjutant General. “As an organization, we’re committed to educating our force and working to prevent sexual assault from happening in the first place. This is a critical effort, because sexual assault and harassment is inconsistent with our core military values, and it erodes trust within an organization that relies on it.”

The Wisconsin National Guard Sexual Assault Response Coordinator takes reports from any service member in the Wisconsin National Guard – no matter if the assault occurs in the course of their military service or in their civilian lives. The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program’s goal is to ensure that survivors of sexual violence have their voices heard and are met with support and resources to help them on their healing journey.

“We consider this a very positive step in the right direction, as we know sexual assaults continue to happen, but now survivors continue to feel more empowered than ever to come forward, and put trust in the organization to support them and help them find the resources they need,” said Capt. Kimberly Roeloffs, the sexual assault response coordinator at Joint Force Headquarters.

In addition to the teal pinwheels, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program has also planned stand downs against sexual assault throughout the month, military sexual trauma training, and will be observing Denim Day on April 28 to support sexual assault survivors.