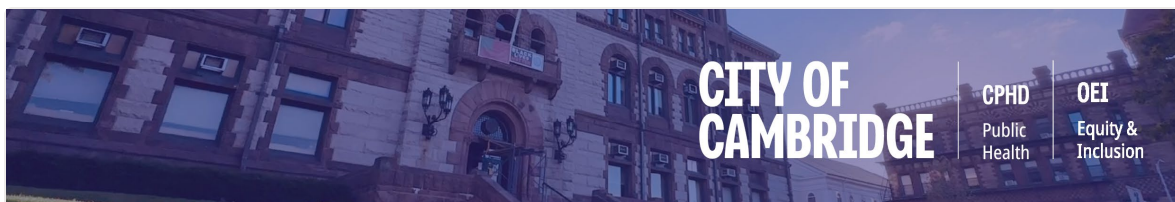


From: [McNeal, Dion](#) on behalf of [CoC Internal Communications](#)
To: [McNeal, Dion](#)
Subject: Read the Final Blog Post for Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Date: Monday, April 28, 2025 7:31:04 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)



Final Blog Post for Sexual Assault Awareness Month



McNeal, Dion
Internal Communications Manager

Greetings **City Staff**,



We're back with our final blog post in our series for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. If you missed our last three posts, [you can read them here](#). Previous posts provide context and framing as you continue to read.

Join us for an engaging virtual event tomorrow, April 30, where we will lean into our discussion. Don't miss this opportunity to share your insights and thoughts about the blog series, connect with others, and more! Be sure to [register to secure your spot](#).

This week, we are concluding what we learned over the last few weeks together. Our goal is to provide you with actionable steps to further your learning and contribute to addressing/ending

sexual violence in our community. To refresh your memory, we have covered the following topics: **the definition of sexual assault, consent, coercion, how to support survivors, and accountable conversations with perpetrators of violence.**

We continue to include a **trigger warning** for this content and [encourage you to take care of yourself](#) as you engage with today's blog post.

***Disclaimer:** The content that we explore together may be triggering for some. We know that there are survivors among us. This blog series is not intended to and does not constitute legal advice, nor is it a replacement for seeking services and support if needed.*

Our Recommendations

"Rigid, evidence-poor laws give us the illusion of taking abuse seriously while doing nothing to make anybody safer." Stone, M. (2024). *The Cost of Fear: Why Most Safety Advice is Sexist and How We Can Stop Gender Based Violence*. Beacon Press.

Our **first recommendation** is to [learn more about sexual violence](#). It is an issue that people tend to feel very strongly about and are often ill-informed about. This combination of strong feelings and lack of information leads to survivor's voices frequently being drowned out by the community's collective outrage. **Center survivor voices.** Throughout this blog series, we have included quotes from books that have shaped our thinking about sexual violence. These readings combine facts, research, and personal narratives. They chart a way forward toward a society that is free of sexual violence. The books quoted throughout this blog series are listed below and include offerings from two Cambridge authors!

1. [Love with Accountability: Digging Up the Roots of Child Sexual Abuse](#) edited by Aishah Shahidah Simmons
2. [The Cost of Fear: Why Most Safety Advice is Sexist and How We Can Stop Gender-Based Violence](#) by Meg Stone
3. [Truth and Repair: How Trauma Survivors Envision Justice](#) by Judith Herman, MD.

In addition to these readings, you can connect with some of the organizations whose work we referenced through this series. They all have websites that are rich with resources and additional information. If you would like to go a step further, a few of them also offer training and volunteer opportunities (indicated by the asterisk*).

1. [Boston Area Rape Crisis Center](#) (BARCC)*
2. [The Network/La Red](#) (TNLR)*
3. [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#) (RAINN)*
4. [A Call for Change](#)
5. [Futures Without Violence](#)*
6. [Mirror Memoirs](#)*

We have included the [City of Cambridge's policy against sexual harassment](#) at the end of this message. It is important that we all be well informed about what constitutes sexual harassment and what we can do if we **witness** or **experience** it. The Office of Equity and Inclusion conducts the mandatory trainings on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace in [May](#) and in [June](#). We encourage you to sign up for this course

right away.

Our **second recommendation** is that we all become comfortable being uncomfortable. Sex and sexual violence are taboo subjects in our society. Many of us grew up in homes where sex was never a topic of discussion and because of this, we have not developed the language to talk about it. We don't know what to say so we remain silent. Our willingness to learn and talk about sex and sexual violence is a key prevention tool. It is a foundational part of building healthy, safe, satisfying, and long-lasting sexual relationships. It is also necessary to support survivors. We provided some [tips in blog 3](#) to help. You still might be uncomfortable having these conversations. That is okay. We were as well. It took practice for us to develop the ability to speak about sex and sexual violence. We encouraged ourselves past our discomfort and are now able to share this information with you. We believe in your ability to do the same. Your willingness to talk about sex and sexual violence will have a positive impact on your life and the lives of those around you.

"Experiencing violence in youth can have [long-lasting impacts](#), making it all the more critical to prevent violence before it occurs. By promoting social norms that protect against violence (such as bystander programs and engaging men and boys) and supporting survivors, we can [lessen the impact](#) of sexual violence and [prevent](#) future victimization."

- National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

Our **third recommendation** is to make practical plans to address sexual violence in areas where you have influence. Examine your work critically to identify areas where abuse and

violence may occur and implement strategies to combat them. The purpose of Shameka's role is to assist you in this process. She is [here and available to support you](#).

We give you the example of a school that worked with students to identify "hot spots" where a lot of bullying and sexual harassment took place. Once identified, they increased staffing in these locations as an intervention strategy. We can each work to identify gaps or areas of concern and create intervention strategies. **Well informed, small changes can make a significant impact.**

"True accountability requires the profound institutional changes that would prevent the repetition of these crimes in the future."

"In addition to their desire to hold individual offenders accountable, survivors fervently wished to hold accountable the institutions that had actively enabled, protected, and covered up for the offenders."

Herman, J. L. (2023). Truth and Repair: How Trauma Survivors Envision Justice. Hachette Book Group.

We are all responsible for building a safer society and places where we work, play, eat, and live. Institutions have made it a practice to look the other way when it comes to issues of sexual violence. Far too often, reports of sexual violence are

met with silence, cover-ups, payouts, and non-disclosure agreements; all of which lead to environments where sexual violence will continue uninterrupted. We all deserve better. We (the authors of this series, Shameka and Teakia) are committed to working for the better and hope that you will [join us](#).

Last Thoughts to Keep In Mind

If you are reading this and are a survivor, know that we support you in your healing journey. The ways that someone chose to hurt you was a choice that **they** made and that **they are responsible for**. You are not to blame. Your healing, your voice, your laughter, your sense of safety, and well being in our world MATTERS! Please take care of yourself.

If you are reading this and have committed acts of sexual violence, know that your actions caused real and lasting harm that **YOU are responsible for**. Your acts of violence are unacceptable. Do not repeat them. While you cannot undo the hurt you've caused, you can choose differently in the future. You can speak out against violence and use your own story and actions to help inform prevention efforts. You have caused harm, do all that you can to create healing.

We hope that this series has been informative and given you new insight about sexual violence. We hope that you feel more prepared and equipped to address sexual violence. We hope this has been a space of validation and healing for survivors. We hope that we will all work together for better. We hope you continue to [come back to this series](#) to further educate yourself.

City of Cambridge Employee Policy on Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment is of particular concern in the workplace. Not only is it destructive of workplace harmony and teamwork, it is

discriminatory and will not be tolerated. Sexually harassing conduct may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature that prevents an individual from effectively performing the duties of his/her position or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, or when such conduct is made a condition of employment or compensation, either implicitly or explicitly. Sexually harassing conduct may be harassment by a man towards a woman, a woman towards a man, or between persons of the same sex. The harasser does not necessarily have to be the victim's supervisor. The victim does not necessarily have to be the one to whom the remarks or conduct are directed, but may be someone whose ability to work is adversely affected by an intimidating or hostile working environment created by the behavior of others. The harasser or the victim could be a member of the public who comes in contact with a City employee."

[Click Here to Read the Sexual Harassment Policy.](#)

Who's Behind This Blog Series



Hi, I'm Teakia Brown [she/her], the Director of Community Engagement at the Cambridge Public Health Department. I lead Population Health initiatives. I have a multidisciplinary background in violence prevention, community engagement, and reproductive health care.

In past work, I have taught sex education classes, ran teen dating violence programs, and worked directly with people who have experienced violence as the Medical Advocate coordinator for the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center. I am deeply committed to this topic and look forward to exploring what sexual assault means to us as City employees and how we can make a meaningful impact on the communities we serve.



Hi, I'm Shameka Gregory [she/her], Coordinator of the Domestic and Gender Based Violence Prevention Initiative for the City of Cambridge. I am a licensed independent clinical social worker who has worked in the field of domestic and gender-based violence for the last decade.

The way that I think about and approach these issues has changed tremendously in my experience time. I have learned from the wisdom and experiences of survivors as a therapist and an advocate. Those are the perspectives I bring to this conversation and what I wish to share with you. As a City and a community, we must always **center** survivors and **listen to** survivors.

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Domestic/Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative and CPHD,
City of Cambridge

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