

# Engaging your community for Honor Denim Day:

## A Toolkit for Partnership, Collaboration, and Action

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### Acknowledgements:

The SPEAK Educator student volunteers with the University of Central Oklahoma Project SPEAK office assisted with the compilation of this toolkit. Mackenzie Masion from the Oklahoma Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (OCADVSA) and Rachele Eskridge from YWCA OKC reviewed the Toolkit and provided feedback. The Project SPEAK office appreciates their efforts and assistance in development of this toolkit. In addition, thanks and acknowledgement is given to the Oklahoma Prevention Leadership Committee that is comprised

### Purpose:

This toolkit is intended to assist organizations and institutions in violence prevention with implementing an effective Honor Denim Day symposium.

### Why you should participate:

We hope that you and your organization or institution choose to join us in the effort of hosting an Honor Denim Day symposium across the state of Oklahoma. Sexual assault prevention advocates that sexual violence is a preventable and learned behavior due to societal norms that condone, tolerate and justify the actions of the perpetrators. Having engaged and meaningful conversations is the first step towards debunking rape myths, addressing the realities of rape culture and ending sexual assault. If you participate in #HonorDenimDayOK this April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017, you will make it possible for more survivors of sexual assault to know their resources and feel more comfortable reaching out for help. You will promote prevention through an artistic and visual approach. Which, will stimulate educational dialogue about the spectrum of sexual

violence and that these acts of violence do not just happen to women, but all genders, ages and orientations.

## **How can you organize and implement an Honor Denim Day Symposium:**

### **Step 1: Think logistics**

- Is it possible for you to host your own HDD Symposium on the same day as the rest of the state?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- Is this program doable within the timeframe allotted? Remember, HDD Symposium date for statewide programming is Wed. April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- Designate a timeframe to collect jeans from donations, going to Goodwill or both. Designate a date and time to distribute to partners and let partners know a date and time that jeans will be collected to display at the HDD Symposium
- What do you want your audience/participants to take away from attending this symposium?
- Think of a place to display a trigger warning or notice of intent for your Honor Denim Day symposium, before participants enter.

### **Step 2: Think Location**

- Do you have an appropriate venue to host the HDD Symposium?
- Do you want to have a small or large symposium?
- Do you want to facilitate a discussion or have a speaker? Or do you want to leave it open for people to come to throughout the day?

### **Step 3: Find a way to display your jeans**

- How many jeans will you want to collect and then distribute to partners for decoration?
- Will it cost you anything? Or can you get them donated? How far in advance, would you need to start collecting them for distribution?
- In what way, can you display the jeans? Perhaps, you display on a rack, easel or have them mounted?

#### **Step 4: Possible Partners to Include**

- Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault shelters
- Your local coalition
- Attorney General's office
- Any agency that provides referrals/resources for advocacy services
- Your local organizations on campus – Women's Outreach Center, LGBTQI+ student organization or department, Greek life, Athletic Department, Counseling Centers, Military bases, ROTC, local police departments, churches Campus Activities and Peer Leaders are a few suggestions.

#### **Step 5: Effective Communication with Partners**

- Draft an invitation email (or use the attachment) to local agencies that work in violence prevention to invite them to participate. If you work at a University, modify the email invitation to send out to student organizations and staff departments to participate.
- Follow-up with an additional email or call for confirmation
- Let your partnering agency, organization or survivor know that they can have their autonomy in decorating the jeans any way that they want to, as long as it doesn't promote victim blaming or rape myths. For example: they can use sharpies, fabric paints, glitter, plastic rhinestones, safety pins, thread, buttons, teal ribbon or other material forms to decorate their jeans.

#### **Step 6: Ensure proper promotion of event and utilize a social media platform**

- Develop a flyer in a timely manner for proper promotion that details the: who, what, where, when and why of HDD Symposium.
- Post pictures to social media after the event has taken place to showcase the success of the event.
- Have a booth or several booths a week or two before the HDD Symposium to be a physical reminder that the event is taking place.
- Remember to properly use the hashtag: #HonorDenimDayOK. This hashtag is vital in showing that Oklahoma took a united effort in recognizing Honor Denim Day. This hashtag can be used in conjunction with another hashtag that identifies your agency, organization or institution.

### **Suggestions on how jeans can be decorated**

- Jeans can be decorated by using: marker, puffy paint, spray paint, white out, buttons, ribbons, sequins, lace, and other fabric, glitter, or having objects glued to the jeans.
- Jeans can also be cut up and frayed
- You can search for ideas on pinterest and or google images of Honor Denim Jeans for inspiration.
- Participants might want to submit a poem or personal statement to go along with the jeans.
- You may have a mix of jean submissions. For example: Jeans from survivors that want to share their personal journey, which they may want to do anonymously or not. You might get jeans from an organization in the community that works with survivors of sexual violence and they might want to promote who they are, so that they can continue to raise awareness about the services they provide. You might get jeans from a student organization that wants to promote positive words of affirmation and support for survivors.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, (insert university) (insert organization to partner with)

This email is being sent to you on behalf of the Project SPEAK office at the University of Central Oklahoma. We are requesting your partnership and collaboration with us in holding a statewide 2017 Honor Denim Day Symposium. The UCO Project SPEAK office consists of the Prevention and Advocacy Coordinator Michelle Stansel and 17 SPEAK Educators. SPEAK Educators are student volunteers whom are trained and dedicated to bringing awareness about interpersonal and sexual violence to the UCO and local communities in our state.

The history behind the international Denim Day protest, began with the Supreme Court case entitled *The Jean's Alibi*, which took place in Italy of 1992, involving an eighteen year old girl who was violently raped by her driving instructor on the back end of an isolated road. She was threatened not to tell, but later confided in her parents about her assault, who then immediately sought to press charges. The instructor was found guilty of a lesser charge of indecent exposure, which the girl appealed, resulting in his conviction of all charges. The instructor later appealed his sentence. The case was picked up by the Italian Supreme Court, where it was eventually overturned. The court's reasoning behind the ruling was that the girl had been wearing "extremely tight "skinny jeans, and had to have either sat there while the man removed the jeans, or removed the jeans herself. The bottom line, was that they did not see this as a rape, rather as a consensual sexual encounter. Hours after the ruling, women of the Italian Parliament launched a protest in outrage and support by wearing jeans to work. The protest caught the eye of the California State Senate, and in 1999, the first Los Angeles Denim Day protest was born.

The UCO Project SPEAK and the SPEAK Educators in collaboration with key local community partners, who respond to sexual assault in Oklahoma plan to team up to carry out an Honor Denim Day Art Symposium in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The symposium will feature jeans decorated by partners and survivors of sexual violence. The goal is to promote awareness and to be a catalyst for conversation around the societal and cultural contexts that promote, condone and tolerate rape culture. These jeans will reflect the missions and experiences of our partner agencies, bring awareness to the rest of the campus and community as well as help sexual assault survivors see that they are believed. We will be collecting used or new jeans in all sizes and colors and sending them out to our project partners, along with a premade tool kit with instructions on how organizations or individuals can decorate their jeans. Once decorated, the SPEAK Educators will recollect the jeans to be displayed in the UCO ballroom, where the jeans will be hung up on the walls around the room with letters from partners explaining who they are, and why they chose to support our mission. We will also hold a booth a week prior to the event, where members of the community can come and learn about the symposium, and decorate their own jean pocket with encouraging words to be displayed the day of the event.

In order to inspire a cultural shift within our state we must unite to influence others to speak out and take action. Which, is why we wish to have you join us in promoting the awareness of sexual violence through hosting your own Honor Denim Day Symposium on your campus on April 26th, 2017. We believe this is a great way to educate your community about sexual violence and

how it can happen to anyone, anytime and at any point in their lives. We appreciate your consideration and we hope we have encouraged you to participate in bringing an Honor Denim Day symposium to your campus. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact Michelle Stansel at [mstansel@uco.edu](mailto:mstansel@uco.edu) or (405)-974-2224.

Sincerely,

UCO Project SPEAK & the SPEAK Educators