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Media Release, November 24, 2008

For Immediate Release: Sexual Assault Centre Introduces Hospital Emergency Room Information Card

"Women and girls who have been sexually assaulted may seek medical help as a first response to what has happened to them," Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services of Halton (SAVIS) counsellor Nicole Pietsch states. "Yet few know where to turn to for information on their rights, police reporting options and accessing emotional support in their community." Worse still, sexual assault survivors who have unresolved questions -- or anxieties -- about medical and legal procedures may delay or forgo medical treatment altogether.

Statistics Canada indicates that women are physically injured in 11% of sexual assaults, and an astounding *nine out of ten* incidents of violence have an emotional effect on the victim -- including depression, flashbacks, sleep disturbances and anxiety¹.

Indeed, studies support that sexual assault can have profound effects on women's health and well-being, resulting in physical as well as psychological and emotional trauma.

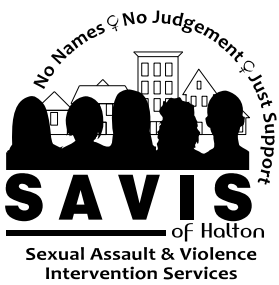
It is for all these reasons -- and in recognition of November being Woman Abuse prevention Month -- that SAVIS is pleased to present its hospital emergency room information card. SAVIS provides free, confidential and non-judgmental 24-hour support to all survivors of sexual violence. Services include a 24-hour crisis line, individual counselling, and accompaniment to hospital, court and police reporting. The emergency room information card, to be used in hospital emergency rooms across Halton, is meant to link sexual assault survivors presenting at local emergency rooms to immediate, on-site support.

The card was created with input from with Nina's Place Regional Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital staff. The trio are members of a group of professionals who work to provide responsive and consistent service to survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

The hospital emergency room information card will enhance the community's existing coordinated response protocol, and promote more accessible support to those impacted by violence.

Funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General Ontario Victim Services Secretariat, the card offers the survivor a variety of immediate support options. For instance, a worker will arrive at the hospital within one hour of accompaniment/support request. Once there, the SAVIS worker's role is to assist the survivor with any questions she may have about medical and legal procedures, supports her emotionally throughout the duration of these procedures, and connect her with support options in the community at large. For those who choose not to access support at the hospital, the back of the card

¹ Statistics Canada, "The Violence Against Women Survey," The Daily, November 18, 1993.



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lists aftercare contact information, including SAVIS website, crisis line and TTY (teletypewriter for the Deaf) numbers.

For more information, please contact Nicole at SAVIS by telephone at (905) 825-3622, TTY (905) 825-3743, or email nicole@savisofhalton.org.

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