



Media Summary

Alachua County Sheriff's Office

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MEDIA SUMMARY: New Tool Available from the Alachua County Sheriff's Office to Link Sexual Assault Victims to Resources

Gainesville, Florida — August 15, 2018: Seek Then Speak, a new tool to support sexual assault victims, is now available as a free resource in Alachua County. It is another victim justice focused initiative brought to the community by the Alachua County Sheriff's Office.

Seek Then Speak helps sexual assault victims engage with local recovery and reporting resources. This web, phone, or mobile app helps survivors gather information, explore options, and take action when they're ready.

Seek Then Speak is available in many languages to increase victim access. If they choose, survivors can begin the process of reporting the crime directly to law enforcement and can request supportive services from victim advocacy. The program helps close gaps in service delivery and promotes justice and healing.

"As few as one in five sexual assault victims report the crime," said Sergeant Heather Phillips of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office Special Victims' Unit. "To help survivors recover and support their participation in the criminal justice process, we need to make it easier for them to reach out for help. Seek Then Speak links victims to the professionals who stand ready to serve them."

Seek Then Speak was developed to help end the silence for sexual assault victims. Victims and their support people connect to Seek Then Speak by web, phone, or mobile app. The program engages them with gradual, supportive dialogue prompts, using an intelligent communication platform. The process helps survivors better understand what happened and explore their options, while remaining anonymous until they choose to make direct contact with law enforcement or victim advocates.

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“Through Seek Then Speak, survivors of sexual assault have a safe way to make sense of their experience and decide what their next steps will be,” Sergeant Phillips said. “They learn they are not alone, and that help is available. Then they can reach out for that help if they choose, but only if and when they are ready.”

Seek Then Speak works in partnership with an agency platform called Victim Link, which was co-developed by Ten8Tech and End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI). Victim Link combines technology and education to improve community responses to sexual assault. The programs also coordinate with Start by Believing, the campaign that prepares friends and family members to respond appropriately to a sexual assault disclosure. Together, they offer a two-part solution for responding to sexual assault victims.

“When someone tells you they were sexually assaulted, the first step is to Start by Believing,” Alachua County Sheriff Sadie Darnell said. “The second is to Seek Then Speak, which connects our victims and survivors to every resource available.”

Seek Then Speak is available to anyone in our community by visiting www.SeekThenSpeak.org, calling 888-865-9863, or downloading the mobile app (Android and iOS).

Additional information and links will be available at www.alachuasheriff.org, as well as the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office Facebook and Twitter accounts. Start by Believing.

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