

# NEWSWORTHY TRENDS

## Connecting Young Victims With Help

(NAPSA)—A new service may help young victims find the help they need.

Every 2 minutes, another American is sexually assaulted. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 44 percent of those victims are under 18 and 80 percent are under 30.

Experts say young victims often have a hard time reaching out for help and talking about their assault.

According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization, many of these younger victims are turning to chat rooms and the Web for help, leaving them vulnerable to unreliable advice and further exploitation. Additionally, these postings allow intimate details of their attack to be visible to the whole world for years to come through the Internet.

To address this dangerous trend, RAINN introduced the National Sexual Assault *Online* Hotline at [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org). This secure, Web-based hotline provides visitors with live support from trained volunteers using an instant-messaging format. The *Online* Hotline provides a safe way to begin recovery, and uses extensive security measures to guarantee that visitors remain completely anonymous.

"More young people use the Web to find health information than to download music," explains Scott Berkowitz, president and founder of RAINN. "To serve these younger victims, we combined the services they need with the technology they embrace."

How important is it for a victim of assault to find help? According to Berkowitz, victims of sexual assault often feel alone and are



**A new online resource could help young crime victims.**

likely to blame themselves for their assault. In addition, victims of sexual assault are:

- Six times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Thirteen times more likely to abuse alcohol.
- Twenty-six times more likely to abuse drugs.

### **Safe Information**

In addition to providing support to victims, RAINN offers extensive resources for visitors about sexual assault, and tips on online safety. The organization also provides friends and family with information on sexual violence and connects users with local resources for follow-up care.

"The *Online* Hotline is a crucial first step towards recovery, towards getting their life back," says Berkowitz. "It's a way to start a dialogue and to get support in a safe, secure and familiar environment."

The National Sexual Assault *Online* Hotline is based on RAINN's telephone hotline, the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-HOPE), which has helped more than 1.2 million people since 1994.

For more information and help, visit [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).