# Safety and Support #MarchingTogether Status Update January 12, 2021

As you know, there has recently been discussion of inappropriate abuse and sexual conduct in the blindness community. This document provides links to recent announcements and offers some guidance on having conversations and answering questions related to this issue. It is intended to help members of the National Federation of the Blind discuss this topic with empathy, love, and sensitivity as conversations take place at the national, state, and local level. The National Federation of the Blind is fully committed to ensuring a safe, healthy environment throughout our movement. We offer this guidance to best encourage healing for survivors and our community.

## Recent NFB Announcements

On Monday, January 4, 2021, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) announced a partnership with RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN will assist us in furthering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming culture free of sexual misconduct for all NFB programs and activities.

On January 4, we also announced the formation of the Survivor Task Force, an advisory team led by survivors who are also NFB members. In representing the voice of survivors, task force members will focus on addressing and preventing abuse and sexual misconduct within the Federation by serving as advisors to the National Federation of the Blind leaders, members, and third-party partners.

Below are the links to the online statements:

* [Partnership with RAINN](https://www.nfb.org/about-us/press-room/national-federation-blind-announces-partnership-rainn)
* [Introducing Our Survivor Task Force](https://www.nfb.org/programs-services/safety-support-marchingtogether)

## Talking About These Issues

You may receive questions from staff, partners, volunteers, or outside stakeholders on this issue. **Please remain supportive, loving, trusting, and empathetic throughout this process.** The following guidance has been prepared to help you with these conversations.

Please be sure to follow your state and local legal requirements concerning mandatory reporting. And, as leaders, notify the victim or survivor of your mandated reporting status prior to them sharing any information with you. This is critical in creating a consent-centered environment across our organization.

### *Media Inquiries*

Important note: major media coverage is currently anticipated, although timing is very uncertain in light of other recent national events. All press inquiries at any level—national, state, or local—are requested to be forwarded to Chris Danielsen, [cdanielsen@nfb.org](mailto:cdanielson@nfb.org) or cell 410-262-1281.

### *Conversations with Survivors*

* Follow your state and local legal requirements concerning mandatory reporting, if the victim or survivor is interested in this path to healing.
* To report a sexual misconduct issue, follow the procedures outlined in NFB’s code of conduct at <https://www.nfb.org/about-us/history-and-governance/code-conduct>, or contact [code@nfb.org](mailto:code@nfb.org) or 410-659-9314, extension 2475. Remember that the victim or survivor must be interested in this path prior to a grievance being filed. Additionally, you, as a leader, must inform the victim or survivor of this path prior to proceeding.
* To get information about NFB’s Survivor Task Force, contact [survivors@nfb.org](mailto:survivors@nfb.org) or 410-659-9314, extension 2238.
* To access professional support and resources, contact RAINN. The [National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline](https://www.rainn.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline) is at 800-656-HOPE (4673). Callers will be contacted by a trained staff member from a service provider in their area.

### *Conversations with Internal and External Stakeholders*

Here are some tips for talking about this issue with our members and external partners. We are committed to focusing on the future and to speak in ways that encourage healing.

* Stress NFB’s commitment to a safe and healthy environment.

“We are committed to a safe and healthy environment throughout our movement.”

“We do not and will not tolerate abuse of any kind.”

“We are taking all necessary steps to ensure blind people can lead their best lives.”

* Rather than discussing the details of NFB’s plans, as outlined in the two public statements, offer a copy of the public statements.
* Victims and survivors have the right to tell their own stories. Others should not engage in discussion or speculation about any particular incident.

### *Social Media*

The following sample post is approved for use. You may also link to our public statements. If you see anything on social media that seems unusual or concerns you, please contact our national social media coordinator, Danielle McCann, [dmccann@nfb.org](mailto:dmccann@nfb.org), extension 2246.

CW: Sexual Abuse

We have engaged @RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, as well as our Survivors Task Force, to assist us in furthering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming culture free of abuse and sexual misconduct as part of all our programs and activities. #MarchingTogether https://www.nfb.org/about-us/press-room/national-federation-blind-announces-partnership-rainn

Below are the links to the NFB’s statements:

* [Partnership with RAINN](https://www.nfb.org/about-us/press-room/national-federation-blind-announces-partnership-rainn)
* [Introducing Our Survivor Task Force](https://www.nfb.org/programs-services/safety-support-marchingtogether)

## FAQs

Q: How long has this been going on? What did you know and when? Were there any incidents at your office/center/facility?

A: Out of respect for survivors, we are not commenting on any specific incidents. The National Federation of the Blind announced a partnership with RAINN, the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN will assist us in furthering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming culture free of sexual misconduct as part of all NFB programs and activities. We are committed to a safe, healthy environment.

Q: What exactly will RAINN be doing?

A: We are entering a committed long-term partnership with RAINN to ensure a safe and healthy environment. The details are included in this statement.

Q: What is the role of the Survivor Task Force?

A: The Survivor Task Force will serve as an advisor during this process to ensure we build a safe, healthy environment. More details can be found in the Introducing Our Survivor Task Force section to nfb.org/survivor. The Task Force will provide monthly updates on our efforts.

Q: What do I say to anyone who reports an incident?

A: The National Federation of the Blind does not tolerate inappropriate behavior. Advise people to follow state and local legal requirements concerning mandatory reporting.

Reports can be filed using the code of conduct grievance report form, by calling our dedicated voicemail box at 410-659-9314, extension 2475, or emailing code@nfb.org. The code of conduct process can be used to file a grievance regarding another member, employee, or contractor of the NFB. If someone files a complaint addressing sexual misconduct as part of our programs or events, that matter will be investigated by an external investigator. Find a way to emphasize this last point because many are wondering what happens to grievances filed now.

*Note: please also provide information for the NFB Survivor Task Force and the RAINN hotline outlined above as needed.*

Q: Why isn’t more information available?

A: We are just beginning these processes. More information and guidance will be available as it is developed.

Q: Any other kind of question.

A: We are only commenting on our steps to ensure a safe, healthy organization at this time.