

# Rick Houston Takes Part in The NFL's Initiative to End Domestic Violence



In the late summer of 2014, the issue of domestic violence became a public focus among NFL fans and the media due to some high-profile cases involving NFL players. Since then, Commissioner Goodell and his team have worked hard to learn as much as they can about these issues and how best to address them.

Though no one can prevent these terrible crimes from being committed, the NFL have moved forward to help those in its vast network of players, coaches, staff and their families who may need it and take steps towards preventing domestic violence and sexual assault before they happen.

Between October and December 2014, nearly every man and woman in the NFL, including some family members (more than 6,000 in all), participated in broad-based domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault education. Mandatory for all league and club office personnel, owners, cheerleaders, coaches, and players and available to and highly encouraged for friends, family members, and loved ones, the education sessions were conducted in person at all 32 clubs and all league offices.

The initial education sessions were intended to help attendees not only understand the scope of behavior that constitutes domestic violence and sexual assault, but also the warning signs associated with these issues. Bystander intervention -- how everyone can be part of addressing and therefore helping prevent this violence -- was another very important focus area of the education.

In July, the NFL launched the second round of league-wide education with players and football personnel attending sessions during Training Camp, and club and league personnel scheduling their sessions for the fall. Rick Houston, Prevention Specialist from Domestic Violence Shelter & Services, Inc. was one of the facilitators for four of the NFL's thirty-two teams. He facilitated trainings for the Arizona Cardinals, Chicago Bears, Detroit Lions, and Tennessee Titans.

Building on the 2014 sessions, the presentations were interactive and thought provoking, using video testimonials to stimulate discussion. In their own words, a sexual assault survivor, a domestic violence survivor and a perpetrator of verbal abuse share their experiences, the impact on them, as well as those around them, and how others either helped or could have helped them.

Domestic Violence Shelter and Services, Inc. is proud to have one of our own working with other organizations to end and prevent domestic violence through education and trainings.