

Sexual assault - The first steps are important

04/20/2009, 12:59 pm

[Comment on this story](#)

[Related stories](#)

By Jon Krenek

jkrenek@daily-journal.com

Believing sexual assault victims as well as acting quickly to protect them are both vital in helping people recover and preventing future occurrences, experts say.

In the case of the alleged sexual assault of an underclassman on the Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School wrestling team, Samir Goswami said the high school acted appropriately in acting quickly to report the incident to police. But follow-up by the Lincoln Police Department appears lacking.

Said Goswami, policy director for the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, "It appears the school, when they found out about it, did the right things. The child was believed right away. I'm really glad the school did the right thing right away, and the coach reported it."

The Daily Journal, in its reporting, found there may have been possibly at least two other incidents of sexual hazing or bullying involving the wrestling team in the last two years. It is not known how the school handled these cases.

Still, Goswami added, the swift action is commendable.

"It's extremely important for the police to be very swift about this. It's to help reassure the parents feel safe and to warn potential abusers this will not be tolerated."

The Lincoln Police Department has jurisdiction over the matter because it allegedly happened during an overnight stay in a Lincoln motel while the team was participating in a holiday tournament.

Lincoln police last Thursday told The Daily Journal they are preparing to forward the case to the Logan County State's Attorney for possible prosecution. The investigation has stretched since the Bradley Police Department first notified Lincoln March 6.

The incident, which allegedly occurred on Dec. 29, 2008, went unreported until March 5 when the victim came forward. A coach noticed a change in the underclassman's behavior and questioned the boy about it, said Steve Coy, Bradley police chief deputy, whose department conducted the initial interviews in the investigation.

Kankakee County Center Against Sexual Assault men's initiative director Tom Greene said it's very common for victims to fear reporting an incident. That's why it's so important to believe the victims. He said only about 20 percent

of all sexual assaults are ever reported, and the percentage is even lower for men.

"It brings down a lot of baggage on the victim," said Greene. "They are automatically put on the defensive."

Goswami said acting swiftly protects victims, especially in a small town. If the perpetrators are allowed to move freely, there is a good chance they will eventually run into their victims.

"It's a small town, and he will see these kids," said Goswami. "It would be dereliction of duty if the police didn't do something about it."

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual assault, call the Kankakee County Center Against Sexual Assault's 24-hour crisis hotline at (815) 932-3322. In Iroquois County, call (815) 432-0420. All calls are confidential.