

IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Survivor Inspired Change

HELPFUL TOOLS FOR POLICE OFFICERS RESPONDING TO A SEXUAL ASSAULT

What can I do?

- Recognize the pivotal role a responding officer plays in the success or failure of rape cases. The reality is responding officers are the most important officials in a sexual assault case.
- Understand many rape victims decide whether or not to continue with the case based on their experience with the responding officer.
- Officers should restore confidence by reassuring they believe a sexual assault has been committed.
- The trauma from the assault affects the response of the victim. The victim may react or respond in a way counterintuitive to expectations. There is no right or wrong way to react.
- Officers should reassure the victim the sexual assault was not their fault.¹
- Stubborn rape myths and stereotypes inform our reactions to sexual assault cases. Start by believing the victim and allow the evidence to lead the investigation. Leave preconceived notions & assumptions behind.
- Explain to victims the importance of preserving bodily evidence until it can be collected by trained medical professional (e.g. do not wash, change clothes, urinate, defecate, smoke, drink, eat, brush hair or teeth, rinse mouth)

Language, Interviewing and Reporting

- Eliminate the word “why” when interviewing. Intentional or not it sounds very blaming.
- Language and wording are vital. Be sure to use non-consensual language in your report. Any implication of consent in the report may hurt the case.
- Use active listening and non-blaming language and let them wind down before you ask the questions necessary to determine the nature of the crime.

Tips for Interviewing a Sexual Assault Victim

- Try wording questions in a way that doesn't label and proceed from there: “Did someone make you have sex when you didn't want to?” instead of “were you raped?”
- Ask the victim if he/she felt scared...if there is fear in the room then there was no consent.
- Take your time when interviewing the victim. You may be providing the first safe presence in which to speak about this assault for the survivor.
- The victim experienced a traumatic event. DO NOT USE Reid Interrogation techniques when interviewing victims of sexual assault.
- Prepare the victim for arduous road ahead by explaining the protocols at your agency for a sexual assault case. (i.e. what can he/she expect next)



Sexual Assault Facts¹

- In Texas 1 in 5 women & 1 in 20 men have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime.
- Over 80% of Texans who were sexually assaulted DID NOT report to law enforcement.
- Only 19% of the sexual assaults were committed by complete strangers, leaving over 80% of sexual assaults committed by someone known to the victim.

Who Are the Perpetrators?

- Over 80% of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.¹
- Most rapists remain undetected.²
- Studies also confirm the undetected rapist is a serial hunter and serial offender– not the misunderstood drunk guy.²
- Over 94% of rapists roam free with only 3% ever spending a day in jail.³

Dynamics

No one “asks” to be sexually assaulted, it is an act committed without consent (period).

Non-stranger rapes are the least likely to get reported and progress through the judicial process, yet account for a majority of the sexual assault occurrences in your community.

98% of non-stranger rapes do not involve a weapon.⁴

The use of alcohol and drugs during non-stranger rape and brief encounter rape is very common.⁵

Victims of non-stranger rape experience a high degree of inner struggle, shame and often blame themselves for the crime.⁵

Non-stranger and brief encounter rape victims are more likely than other victims to be blamed and to have their entire past sexual histories scrutinized, and as a result feel re-victimized.⁵

¹Busch, N.B., Belly, H., DiNitto, D.M., Neff, J.A. (2003) A Health Survey of Texans: A Focus on Sexual Assault. Institute of Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, University of Texas at Austin

²Madigan, T. (2012). The serial rapists is not who you think. Star Telegram Online Retrieved from: www.star-telegram.com/2012/08/19/4191666/the-serial-rapist-is-not-who-you.html

³Retrieved from: <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/reporting-rates>

⁴Lisak, D., Miller, P.M. (2002) Repeat Rape and Multiple Offending Among Undetected Rapists. Violence and Victims (Vol.17 N.1) pp.73-84

⁵Non-Stranger(Acquaintance) & Brief Encounter Rape document. SAFVIC Curriculum-Funded by the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor Grant#WF-08-V30-20700-05 (Updated June 2012)

