

TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH INCARCERATED SURVIVORS

Erica Gammill & Elia Inglis

Incarcerated Survivor Advocacy Program

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault





ABOUT TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT



TAASA is the statewide organization committed to ending sexual violence in Texas

TAASA member programs comprise a statewide network of approximately 80 rape crisis centers and dual SA/DV programs



Mission:

TAASA is committed to ending sexual violence in Texas through education, prevention and advocacy. In the meantime, we desire to support survivors on their paths to hope, healing and justice. TAASA is the voice of the sexual assault movement in Texas. We are a unifying force bringing together parties involved in and affected by sexual assault as a catalyst for change.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Erica Gammill, Prisoner Advocate

and

Elia Inglis, Policy Analyst

Quick Poll:

How many groups here are already providing support services to incarcerated survivors?



About the Program

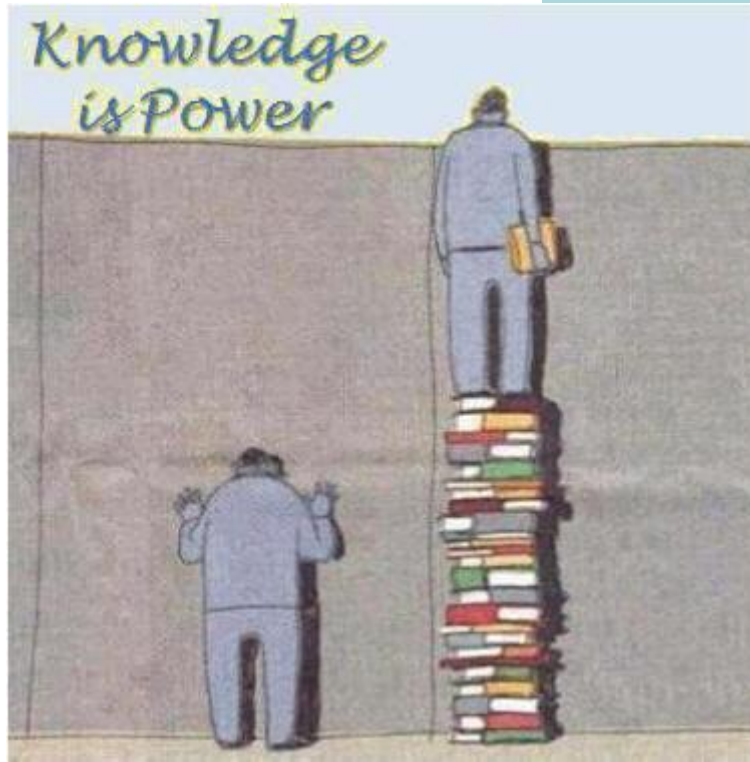
- Incarcerated Survivor Advocacy Program (ISAP) launched late 2016
- Offers support, advocacy, and resources to incarcerated survivors, service providers, and correctional staff
- Works with Policy & Legal Team

About the program, cont'd

- We believe no one deserves to be raped regardless of what choices they've made in their lives
- All survivors of sexual assault deserve the same level of respect, compassion, and services as survivors in the community
- We acknowledge that incarcerated survivors have unique needs and may require tailored services

Background on the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

- Prison rape is a national problem, one that exists in nearly every correctional setting in the country
- The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requires correctional facilities to adopt a zero-tolerance standard for the incidence of prisoner sexual assault
- PREA was enacted in 2003 to eliminate sexual abuse prevalent in correctional facilities.
- It has three clear goals: to prevent, detect, and respond to prison rape



Background Information

Introduction to Texas Prison Population

- 109 state prisons, 16 federal facilities, 160+ county jails, ~15 community corrections facilities
- Total population = 148,146 (prison) 65,000 (county jail)
 - Male = 135,447
 - Female = 12,699
 - African-American = 33.8%
 - White = 32%
 - Hispanic = 33.3%
- Average Educational Attainment= 8th grade
- Average sentence length = 18 years

Prison Population & Sexual Assault

- Prisoners with a history of sexual abuse prior to incarceration are at higher risk of being sexually assaulted behind bars
- Certain prisoners are more vulnerable to rape and may be targeted for sexual exploitation
 - Prisoners who are young
 - Physically small or weak
 - LGBTQI identifying
 - First-time offenders
 - Prisoners who have been convicted of a sexual offense against a minor
- Only 1/3 of inmates reported their sexual abuse, and 1/10 received assistance from a counselor

Prison Population & Sexual Assault, Cont'd

- 15% of incarcerated females have been the victims of prison sexual assault nationally
- Women comprise only 7% of the state prison population, but they comprise 46% of sexual abuse victims
- The rate of inmate-on-inmate SA is at least 3 times higher for females (13.7%) than males (4.2%)

Forms of Sexual Abuse in Prison

- Threats and/or sexual harassment
- Coercive sexual abuse
 - Protection
 - Money/Commissary
 - Forced relationships

Staff Sexual Abuse

- In 2011, roughly half (49%) of total nationally reported sexual assaults (8,763), were committed by staff members
- Sexual relationships between staff and inmate cannot be consensual by definition - in fact, they are illegal
- Inmates may not report a sexual assault by staff because of fear of retaliation, like threats, fear of losing privileges, etc.
- Underreporting of sexual assaults in correctional settings is more likely when the abuse is committed by

Texas Prison Sexual Assault Rates

- Sexual assault rates in Texas prisons remain among the highest in the nation
- In 2013, five Texas prisons had rates of sexual victimization more than double the national average of 4.5%, including two facilities with the highest rates in the country
- Between 9.3% and 15.7% of all prisoners in Texas prisons had reported being sexually assaulted within the previous twelve months

Texas Rates, Cont'd

- Texas facilities also rank high in staff-on-inmate sexual assault rates: for example, the Clements Unit (9.5%) and the Coffield Unit (6.8%) have among the nation's worst rates
- National average for staff-on-inmate sexual victimization was 2.4%

PREA & Service Providers

- Corrections agencies must work with local rape crisis centers and other victim services agencies to ensure services for incarcerated survivors
- Corrections facilities must provide survivors with access to a medical forensic exam performed by a qualified medical practitioner (outside of the facility)

PREA & Service Providers, Cont'd

- Survivors must be offered a certified rape crisis advocate to accompany them during the forensic exam
- Corrections facilities must provide access to outside advocates through hotlines and mail, and take steps to ensure that this communication is confidential

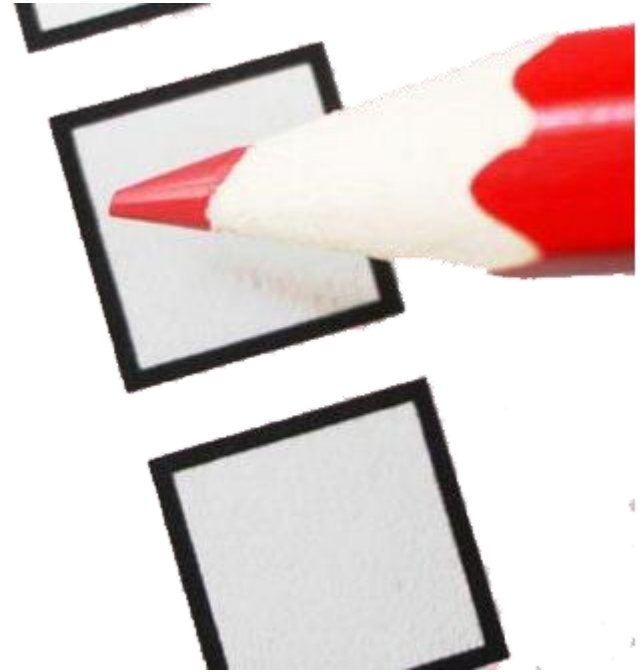
VOCA Funding Update

- Recent VOCA rule change (*effective 8/8/16*) which removes the restriction on rape crisis centers from using VOCA funds to provide services to incarcerated survivors of sexual assault
- What does this mean for you?
 - Frees up resources for working with incarcerated survivors



What do you need to know when
working with incarcerated survivors?

Quick Poll:



What is your greatest apprehension of working with incarcerated survivors?

General Tips for Working with I.S.

- Providing services to incarcerated survivors is similar to providing services to clients in the community, and generally not more dangerous to serve
- Build trust by making it clear that you see them as a person worthy of respect
- Address safety concerns with facility staff prior to meeting with an incarcerated survivor

General Tips for Working with I.S.

- Identify common goals and objectives with the corrections agency prior to establishing a formal relationship
- Advocates should not compromise confidentiality - it is just as important for incarcerated survivors (but can be limited)
- Be patient, consistent, and persistent. The best way to earn the trust of a survivor is by being consistent

General Tips for Working with I.S.

- Possible support services include:
 - Hotline (allowing collect calls may increase access)
 - Correspondence program
 - In-person support services
 - *Hospital accompaniment*
 - *Crisis counseling*
 - *Support groups/ongoing individual counseling*

General Tips for Working with I.S.

- Become familiar with how investigations (administrative and criminal) are carried out in their facility
- Have a plan on how to respond if incarcerated clients share thoughts or plans of suicide
- Respond quickly and compassionately
- Prepare a list of referrals and send promptly, especially to clients in county jails

Tips for Specific Support Services:

Hotline

- Start incorporating information about the needs of incarcerated survivors into your advocate or hotline training
- Clearly explain to clients the limits to the confidentiality of hotline calls from a corrections facility
- Determine a point person in the corrections facility to assist the hotline program

Tips for Specific Support Services:

Correspondence

- Advocates should offer support, information, and referrals to incarcerated survivors
- If possible, advocates should respond to written correspondence from incarcerated survivors within one week
- Get permission from a survivor before forwarding a letter to the corrections agency on their behalf
- Build trust by using official letterhead, responding quickly, and apologizing for when you can't get back to them quickly
- It is helpful to give incarcerated survivors an indication on how long it usually takes for you to respond

Tips for Specific Support Services:

In-Person Support

- An advocate should arrive on time for an appointment
- Inmates are transferred regularly, call the unit to make sure they are still there before you arrive
- Leave time within the session to help the survivor plan coping skills, make sure he or she has the rape crisis center's contact information, and develop a safety plan



How can TAASA support you?

How can TAASA support you?

- Provide materials
- Training & technical assistance
- Resources, webinars, sample documents, etc.
- What other things would be helpful for you?



Questions? Comments?



Thank you!

Incarcerated Survivor Advocacy Program

512.474.7190 x 19

egammill@taasa.org

einglis@taasa.org

**Additional resources at:
www.taasa.org/about/public-policy**