SARTing with the Facts

Presenter

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The Sexual Violence Justice Institute equips multidisciplinary teams and allied professionals with the concepts, tools, training and resources needed to create a victim-centered response to sexual violence within their local communities.
SVJI’s STOP Administrator’s Project: customized for STOP and SASP administrators to explore the state and U.S. Territory conditions that make local teams effective while fostering innovation in the response to sexual violence.

Advisory Board: ALSO, Debi Cain, Cecilia Miller, Maryellen Garcia

The State of Sexual Violence Response

Realities of Sexual Violence

#MeToo
The context of sexual violence changes the nature of the crime and needs of victims

- Brief encounter
- Alcohol facilitated
- Same sex
- Familial
- Sex trafficking
- Survival sex
- Stranger
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking
- Intimate partner
- Position of authority
- Child vs. adult
- Statutory rape

Reporting Sexual Violence
- Rape: 36%
- Attempted rape: 34%
- Sexual Assaults: 26%
- 1 in 3 never told anyone
- False Reports: 2-6%

- Self-blame or guilt
- Shame, embarrassment, or desire to keep the assault a private matter
- Humiliation or fear of the perpetrator or other individual's perceptions
- Fear of not being believed or of being accused of playing a role in the crime
- Lack of trust in the criminal justice system

Affiliation Affects Reporting
- Intimate Partner: 25%
- Acquaintance: 18-40%
- Stranger: 46-66%
- College/Uni: 10%
Characteristics of Sexual Violence

- Physical injury is infrequent
- Intentional acts
  - Premeditated behaviors occur before violence
- Patterned violence
  - Frequently, with different victims
- Victims may not name sexual violence
- Reluctance to disclose

Sexual Violence Disclosure

- Role of 1st disclosure
  - Informal and Formal Supports
- Negative experience
  - Self-doubt/blame, PTSD, less likely to seek help
- Positive experience
  - Increased help seeking, reduced symptoms, resiliency
- Disclosure leads to recovery

Disclosure and Types of Response

- Turning Against (78%)
  - Overtly negative responses (stigma, blame)
  - Social withdrawal, self-blame, decreased assertiveness
- Unsupportive Acknowledgement (94%)
  - Addresses assault, but provides no support or assistance
  - Worse coping, higher rates of depression and PTSD, worse long-term outcomes

References:


Needs of Sexual Violence Victims

- Belief
- Self-determination
- Emotionally supportive services
- Informed responders
- Information re: Options
- Medical care
- Housing, etc.

What Can SARTs Do?
Reimagining the Purpose and Scope of SART Work

What is a SART?
- Sexual Assault Response Team
- Multi-disciplinary representatives
  - Differing views, approaches, constraints, and experiences
  - Devoted to changing SV response in community
  - Focused on collaboration and systems change
  - Working to improve outcomes for V/S
The Study

- Identify core characteristics of SARTs that are successful in modifying system policy or practice and the supports they need
- Resources for SARTs, funders, trainers

Definition of Institutional Change

An improvement in the response to sexual assault that gets into:

- Policy
- Protocol
- Routine Practice

The improvement promotes victim well-being, offender accountability, and ultimately, community safety in the short or long run.
The change can be traced back to the work of the team.

The Study Continued

- How we gathered information
  - Literature review
  - 17 SARTs participated
  - In-person consensus-building meetings
  - Collected stories of the lived experience of SARTs
Characteristics of SART Effectiveness

- Team purpose and focus
- Team membership and engagement
- Team governance, planning and decision-making
- Team values and perspectives
- Team operations

SART Ecology

- Access to resources
- Team members’ organizational context
- Community context
- Member empowerment

System-Change SARTs Said...

- By person it is institutionalized. But protocol helps us institutionalize it in our organization.

  –Investigator, CO
I’m a huge fan of the advocates. They are our greatest resource. They play a huge role in making sure the victim knows what’s going on in their case. With all my other cases, I don’t have time in my day-to-day work to keep victims in the loop. I only contact them when something big comes up. Advocates are the link to what’s going on. They are also a huge part of the communication and create understanding about victim issues on the team. I don’t understand how people get by without them.

- Detective, CO

Using evaluation, we found that our system was broken. We have many different agencies funneling into one office, doing different things. We asked: why do we have such disparate quality in investigation? We found that if everyone is on the same page it improves quality of cases.

– SART Member, OR

The SANE presented research to the group on a new test. The Sex Crimes Sergeant conducted further research into the costs and options with two different crime labs. This was presented to the group and then the Commander was able to make an informed decision, find money, and implement the new test. Another example is when the group made a decision together to change the welcoming process for victims arriving at the police department. The change included a process where victim specialists meet victims downstairs instead of a detective announcing the victim’s name in the lobby.

– Coordinator, CO
The SART has some “core” members who represent each discipline, who are consistently in attendance and help guide policy and protocols. The core members represent prosecutors, law enforcement (local and schools), advocates, and medical. The core members equally bring to the table, changes in the law and operating procedures that effect the handling of our cases. By doing so, the group is able to come together to educate and/or strategize how to incorporate or deal with those changes in an effort to maintain the high level of case management. To a lesser degree, it also helps shape how we choose to present and/or handle those changes in the courtroom.

—District Attorney, VA

We are all so protective about what we do in our professional work, we forget how important it is to collaborate. We become better at what we do, and there is a smaller negative impact on victims. The team allows us to find out best practices! This is what we need. We need to share ways we can do our job better.

—Detective, CO

Summary of Successful System-Change SARTs:

- Hold a shared vision and model of the system response
- Foster a learning culture
- Benefit from diverse membership and strong relationships
- Require multi-level leadership
- Strive to understand benefits and gaps and work towards improvement
What Does it Mean?

- Avenues for Growth
- Areas of Challenge
- Places for Strategic Support

It Means: Doing Our Work Differently

- Organizational priorities
- Funding and grants
- Training and cross training
- Working across allocations
- Policies
- Practice

Coalitions and Administrators: Meaningfully Addressing Sexual Assault

- The ‘Ecology’ must encourage service provision and responses that
  - Attend to the characteristics of SV
  - Reflect actual victim/survivor need
  - Support effective multidisciplinary collaborative work
STOP Sub-Grantees

► Fund SART related work that reflects known effectiveness
► Support SARTs to focus on systems-change work, rather than individual cases
► Require signed agreements with leadership in law enforcement and prosecution
► Fund SART training
► With state, tribal and U.S. territory coalitions develop state-wide communication linkages between all SARTS

STOP Implementation Plan

► Add a SART member to planning committee
► Discuss current supports available to SARTS and gaps
► Use a portion of STOP set-aside to fund local or state-level SART projects

Coalitions in all work integrate:

► Characteristics of sexual violence
► Actual vs. Perceived victim/survivor needs
STOP Administrators Technical Assistance and Training

The STOP Services, Training, Options and Resources (STOP) Administrators Project provides technical assistance and training on the implementation response to sexual violence in areas of special expertise of the Minnesota Coalition on Domestic Abuse (MNCASA). STOP and STOP Administrators Project have a unique and important role in facilitating and training others to respond to sexual assault in their communities. Administrators work with Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) and other sexual assault response groups. The project is committed to a SART and self-help leaders to enhance their effectiveness in implementing training on the response to sexual assault.

STOP offers STOP and STOP Administrators Program:
- Support in scenarios and concerns about teams, including planning and policy changes and support efforts for effective training in addressing sexual assault.

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Administrators Web Page:
http://mncasa.org/stop-administrators-project/