

# SVJI Core Intervention Principles



Sexual Assault Response Teams<sup>1</sup> work to improve a community's response to sexual violence by designing multidisciplinary, victim-centered interventions. Through various tools and training, these teams influence the response patterns of participating members and their agencies. The team's goal is an adaptive and self-correcting system which seeks good case outcomes through a victim-centered approach. A victim-centered approach attends to victim agency (supporting victims in a way that helps them to make their own best decisions), victim safety, offender accountability, and changing community norms which blame and silence victims.

Assumptions underlying our work:

1. **Victim/survivors are not to blame** for being sexually assaulted. They did not 'provoke' the abuse or assault. Interventions should focus on changing the offender's behavior and/or improving the system and community response, not changing the victim/survivor. When they DO report, cases should be vigorously investigated.
2. **Victim/survivors best know what decisions are right for themselves** in the context of the unique circumstances of their lives. Assistance should be geared to providing information and support to help in decision-making relative to the victim/survivor's own goals of establishing *safety, healing, and seeking justice*. Informed decision-making means the victim/survivor knows what could be gained or lost in the options available to him or her. While all responders should facilitate victim agency, victim/survivors should have repeated access to free and confidential advocacy services to help guarantee it.
3. **Recognize that sexual violence affects each individual differently.** Responders should be especially aware of the differential impact that sexual violence has on non-majority community members. Responders should consider specific ways to increase safety and accessibility that account for these differences.
4. **Each responder has a unique role to play in the response. A coordinated interdisciplinary response** that supports and recognizes these roles—including *that of victim advocates*—is good for victim/survivors AND for community and public safety. Victim/survivors are best served when responders fulfill their roles with high degrees of skill, compassion, and coordination/collaboration with other responders.

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<sup>1</sup> These teams are known by various names including, Sexual Assault Interagency Councils (SAIC), Sexual Assault Multidisciplinary Response Teams (SMART), and sometimes Coordinated Community Response teams.

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5. **Interdisciplinary teams need to learn** about the current response, **design** interventions, **and monitor and evaluate** their interventions **together**. The overall process must involve times when the team **solicits information and insight from those outside the team—including victim/survivors themselves** and the people they most often turn to in a community.

Teams can also use the following questions to guide a victim-centered response: Have we received input from the victim/survivor at this stage? How will this affect the victim/survivor's safety? How does this further justice-making? How can we proceed with the case with minimal negative impact on the victim/survivor?

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