

Considerations for Team Formation

Communities can meaningfully improve and strengthen the systems' response to sexual violence through establishing a multidisciplinary team like a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). While every community is different, there are a few key decisions that require consideration early in the process of team formation. As you form a collaborative team to address sexual violence cases, below are key points to discuss with your team.

Team Purpose and Outcomes

Groups must answer why they want to develop a team and what they hope to accomplish. Knowing what an individual or agency hopes to achieve in the short-term and long-term orients your team and shapes the scope of the collaborative efforts. Thorough continuous improvement processes, your team can achieve their purpose.

Existing or Similar Teams

Determine if your community already has a pre-existing team or if there are similar teams that already meet. Determine if or how you might cooperate with these teams. Additionally, how will you differentiate and focus on sexual violence in your meetings as well as support agencies as they work on multiple teams.

Size of Service Area for Team

Different communities have different limits to the size of their service areas. Teams can be based upon city limits, county limits, or multi-county regions. This is dependent upon community make-up and where most providers give services. This will help determine who should be involved with the team. This conversation should also include jurisdiction conversations—especially if there are multiple counties, tribal lands, federal lands, or state lines.

Team Membership

Team members should be from community agencies that respond to sexual violence and have the capacity to change current practices, policies, and protocols. Most teams are created with core agencies such as community advocacy, law enforcement, medical providers, prosecution, and corrections/probation. The individuals who attend meetings do so as a representative of their agency. Other agencies should reflect the community and are critical points of sexual violence disclosure such as military installations, colleges/university, or adult protections.

Who Will Coordinate and/or Facilitate the Team

Typically, one agency takes the lead for supporting the team's work. This agency often serves as the fiscal agent for team funding and houses the team's coordinator. However roles are divided among participating agencies, it should be clear who will oversee logistical support for the team as well as how participating agencies will contribute to the coordination or facilitation of team activities.

Formalizing Agency Commitments

Teams benefit from having an interagency agreement, memorandum of understanding, or a joint letter of commitment that describes the work of the team including purpose, participation expectations, in-kind contributions, and limitations. These agreements should be signed by the head of each agency and/or the governing body. Many funding entities require agreements as a condition of funding a project.

Team Meetings

In the early steps of team formation, the group must decide how often and where to meet as a team. In the early years of an SART, we recommend once monthly meetings to ensure that the team can function effectively. Over time, the frequency may increase or decrease depending on the team's projects. Teams can either choose a static location or may wish to rotate meeting locations, depending on factors like how far providers have to travel to attend meetings or meeting space availability.

Including Victims/Survivors

It is necessary to incorporate the voices and experiences of victims/survivors, and each team must decide how they will do so. Some teams choose an advisory council, a review committee, or a data/information collection project. There are many opportunities to learn from victims/survivors, choose what will be most beneficial.

Is a SART a Good Fit for Our Community?

Not all communities benefit from a traditional SART. Take time to explore your resources and options about different collaborative formations. Choose whichever one will result in meaningful change to the sexual violence response in your community. SVJI is here to help with any of these topics and more.

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