

SVJI Core Intervention Principles



Sexual Assault Response Teams¹ 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.

¹ 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.

This project is supported, in part, by Grant No. 2007-TA-AX-K011 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the trainers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. This project is also supported by Grant No. 2010-SMART-00475 from the Office of Justice Programs, Minnesota Department of Public Safety. Points of view or opinions expressed are those of the authors.

SVJI Core Intervention Principles



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?

This project is supported, in part, by Grant No. 2007-TA-AX-K011 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the trainers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. This project is also supported by Grant No. 2010-SMART-00475 from the Office of Justice Programs, Minnesota Department of Public Safety. Points of view or opinions expressed are those of the authors.