Interpersonal Violence: an RA’s Response to Disclosures

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Guidelines for Discussion

- Safe place
- Purpose
- Language Used
- Training Layout:
  - Definitions.
  - Questions.
Types of Sexual Misconduct

- **Sexual Assault**: Non-consensual sexual contact which includes rape as well as crimes such as incest, sexual harassment, and other unwanted sexual contact.

- **Rape**: Non-consensual penetration - oral, vaginal, anal. Rape can be perpetrated by men and women, and in same sex relationships.

- **Acquaintance Rape**: Any forced or coerced sexual activity by someone known to the victim; non-legal term used to reinforce the fact that most victims know their attacker.

- **Sexual Harassment**: Unwelcome and unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, comments, or physical contact of a sexual nature that is unwelcome and unwanted.

*RAPE IS A CRIME OF POWER AND CONTROL*
Relationship Violence

- Partner violence is controlling, coercive, abusive, and/or aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship.
- It can include verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or a combination of these.
Stalking & Cyber-Stalking

• Stalking refers to – repeated following or harassing or threatening behavior that causes fear or distress.
  • Such can include physical stalking or cyber-stalking.
• Either type of action may or may not be accompanied by a credible threat of serious harm. But both types can cause psychological damage, and each can potentially lead to an assault or even murder.
A Picture of Victims of Sexual Violence

- 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be sexually assaulted before the age of 17 (Briere & Elliott, 2003)
- Most survivors of sexual assaults are full-time students. Approximately one-third of them are first year students between 17-19 years old.
What percentage of females will be raped during their college years?

A. 25%
B. 100%
C. 12%
D. 75%
A Picture of Victims of Domestic Violence

- **Women ages 16 to 24 are** most likely to be abused in a dating relationship.
- **Approximately 32% of college students are** victims of domestic violence.
- **39%-54% of college dating violence victims** remain in physically abusive relationships.
- **More than three women and one man are** murdered by their intimate partners every day.

A Picture of Victims of Stalking

- **3.4 million people** over the age of 18 are stalked each year in the United States.
  - *81% of women are* stalked by a current or former intimate partner and are also physically assaulted by that partner;
  - *31% are* sexually assaulted by that partner.
- **Persons aged 18-24 years** experience the highest rate of stalking.
- **1 in 12 women** and **1 in 45 men** have been stalked in their lifetime.

(Stalking Resource Center National Statistics)
A Picture of Offenders

- **80-90% of sexual assaults are** perpetrated by individuals known to the survivor.
- **85% of rapes are** committed by a person the victim knows.
- In a recent study by the National Institute of Justice (2008), **survivors of rape knew their attackers as:**
  - Fellow classmates (35.5%)
  - Friends (34.2%)
  - Boyfriends or ex-boyfriends (23.7%)
  - Acquaintance (2.6%)

*(National Institute of Justice (2008))"
Why would someone choose not to report?
Why would someone not report?

- Embarrassed to tell what happened
- Fear of not being believed
- Shame, guilt, feeling too dirty
- Do not realize they were sexually assaulted (not a stranger)
- They did not fight back
- May have been threatened
- Perpetrator is well known and well liked
- Not knowing how to report or to get support
Common Victim/Survivor Reactions to Interpersonal Violence

- Shock, disbelief, fear, denial, mood swings, embarrassment, anger, irritability, apathy, disturbed sleep and changes in eating habits.
- Feel guilty or responsible for the assault especially if alcohol was involved.
- Question their judgment and/or have difficulty trusting others.
- That no one will believe them
- Like they are overreacting
- Coping may be more difficult because of the failure of others to recognize the emotional impact is just as serious as in stranger rape.
*This training defines victim as someone who indicates that s/he has experienced some form of interpersonal violence.
Victims Rights to Report

- Action to be taken against offender = Reporting
- Who can report?
  - Victims
  - Witnesses
  - University Employees

Resident Assistants
UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY: RESIDENT ASSISTANTS
Responding to Disclosures

When a student comes to you, **BE:**

- Non-judgmental
- Honest
- Supportive
- Informed
Something to Consider

Do you know what level of confidentiality you can provide to victims?

LIMITED
receiving a DISCLOSURE.
When a Student Discloses Interpersonal Violence

- **Listen**
- Show **support**
- **Don’t blame** the victim
- **Assure** them that there are support services available
- **Inform** your Hall Director.
- **Confidentiality:** Keep information private from other students and staff members.
An RA’s Response to disclosures:

- As a resident assistant you do not have confidentiality.
- Remember interpersonal violence is a crime, therefore, you must report any incidences to your hall director/hall director on duty immediately.
An RA’s Response to disclosures:

- Steps to be taken:
  - **First:**
    - Ensure the immediate safety of the victim, regardless of when the assault occurred. Address critical and/or life threatening needs by calling 911.
An RA’s Response to disclosures: What to say... 

- Tell the person:
  - “I can see that you are upset”
  - “You are not alone”
  - “You are not to blame”
  - “Help is available to you”
  - “After an assault, health & safety comes first”
  - “This is a serious issue”
An RA’s Response to disclosures:

- **Second:**
  - Support the victim-survivor with the assumption that the victim-survivor is telling the truth, all while referring the student to the Hall Director present or on duty, *immediately*.
    - *I am here to listen and support you, and will have to contact a hall director. It may be helpful for you to talk with someone who has specialized knowledge in this area.*
    - *Even if you don’t know what you want to do right now, it can be helpful to speak with someone about your options.*
    - *If the Police arrive, you will not be forced to speak with them.*
An RA’s Response to disclosures:

- **REMEMBER**
  - **Do not discuss this situation with anyone other than a supervisor.** This is a very difficult situation for all involved. Privacy and respect are critical. In residence hall situations victim blaming needs to be avoided as much as possible and your cooperation will be necessary.
  - **Remember to take care of yourself.** Counselors and support are available for you as well.
SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM
SART
Sexual Assault *Response* Team (SART)

- Multi-disciplinary team that responds to reports of interpersonal violence.
- Provides coordinated response and supportive response to victims.
- Explains victim’s options for confidentiality, medical support, counseling, etc.
Sexual Assault *Resource* Team (SART)

- Provides ongoing assessment and reviews of the University’s sexual assault policies and procedures
- Advises the University on educational programs for sexual assault awareness, prevention, and community safety.
LET’S MEET THE SART
**Effects of Trauma**

- Interpersonal violence is experienced as trauma to the body and brain and is carried with us throughout their lives.

- Jeopardizes students’ academic achievement.

- Undermines their physical and emotional well-being.

- Residents may become withdrawn. Be sure to speak with someone if you are concerned about a student.

- Sexual assault victims are more likely to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, to abuse alcohol and drugs, and contemplate suicide.
Your Intervention

- Interpret situations that could lead to assault before it happens or during an incident
- Speak out against social norms that support interpersonal violence
- Be an effective and supportive ally to victim-survivors
Thank You!

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It is our responsibility to . . .
Reach. Educate. Change.