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Understanding Sexual Violence: Training Facilitation Guide

October 2016



The facilitator guide is organized into six units: types and prevalence of sexual violence; dynamics of sexual assault; effects of victimization; rape myths and victim blaming; sexual assault reporting; and responding appropriately to survivors.

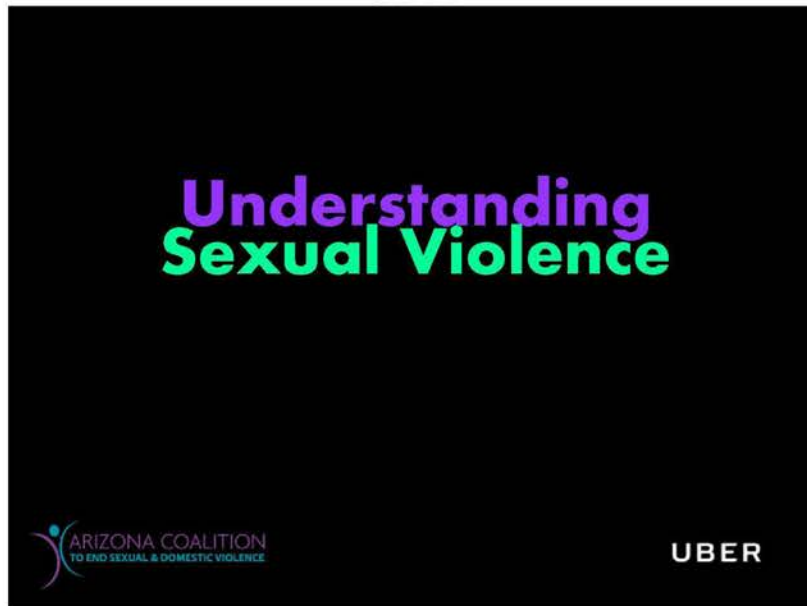
Units		Purpose/Description	Approx. Length of Unit
1	TYPES AND PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE	The purpose of this unit is to define forms of sexual violence and learn the frequency at which sexual violence occurs in our society.	5 minutes
2	DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT	The purpose of this unit is to increase understanding about the dynamics of sexual assault and the motivations of perpetrators.	3 minutes
3	EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION	The purpose of this unit is to understand the neurobiology of trauma and traumatic responses among sexual assault survivors.	3 minutes
4	RAPE MYTHS AND VICTIM BLAMING	This purpose of this unit is to identify common rape myths and victim blaming statements in order to recognize and combat biases against sexual assault survivors.	6 minutes
5	SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING	The purpose of this unit is to examine common barriers to reporting sexual assault to law enforcement.	5 minutes
6	RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO SURVIVORS	The purpose of this unit is to provide participants with best practices on appropriately responding to survivors of sexual assault.	10 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Slides 1-2

Purpose: To learn fundamental information about sexual violence and how to respond to survivors.

SLIDE 1



SLIDE 2



Unit 1: TYPES AND PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Slides 3-9

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to define forms of sexual violence and learn the frequency at which sexual violence occurs in our society.

Length: 5 minutes

SLIDE 3: DEFINITIONS



INTRODUCTION:

"Sexual violence, also known as sexual assault, is a general or 'umbrella' term that encompasses a variety of acts/crimes."



Unwanted Sexual Contact:

"Any unwanted sexual experiences involving touch, but not sexual penetration, such as being kissed in a sexual way or having body parts fondled or grabbed."¹



Sexual Coercion:

“Sexual coercion is when a person uses tricks, or some kind of verbal or emotional pressure in order to have sexual contact.”

Examples:

- *Wearing someone down by repeatedly asking for sex or acting unhappy when they said no¹*
- *Reacting negatively (e.g., with sadness, anger or resentment) if the other person says no or doesn't immediately agree to a sexual act³*
- *Threatening to end a relationship if the other person won't do a sexual act¹*



Sexual Harassment:

“Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical sexual conduct that is unwanted.”²



Sexual Exploitation:

“Sexual exploitation means taking advantage of the sexuality and/or attractiveness of a person to make a personal gain or profit (e.g., sex trafficking).”⁴



Stalking:

“Stalking can also be a form a sexual violence when there is a sexual component to the stalking behaviors.”

Definition: A course of conduct directed at a specific person that involves repeated visual or physical proximity, nonconsensual communication, or verbal, written, or implied threats, or a combination thereof, that would cause a reasonable person fear.⁵



Rape/Attempted Rape:

“Any unwanted vaginal, oral, or anal penetration, whether it is completed or attempted.”¹

SLIDE 4: PREVALENCE

**In America, a woman is raped
every 2 minutes.**

[Let attendees read this silently]

“Does this surprise you?”

[Brief pause for responses]

“Unfortunately, sexual violence occurs frequently in our society.”⁶

SLIDE 5: PREVALENCE



1 in 5 women have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime¹



1 in 2 women have experienced other forms of sexual violence¹

Other forms of sexual violence include sexual coercion, sexual harassment, and unwanted sexual contact.



1 in 71 men have experienced rape¹

"This is likely an underestimate."

"In our culture, there is the myth that men can't be raped, or we have the expectation that men be tough and strong. So, men are less likely to report rape than women."



1 in 5 men have experienced other forms of sexual violence¹

Other forms of sexual violence include being made to penetrate someone, sexual coercion or harassment, and unwanted sexual contact.

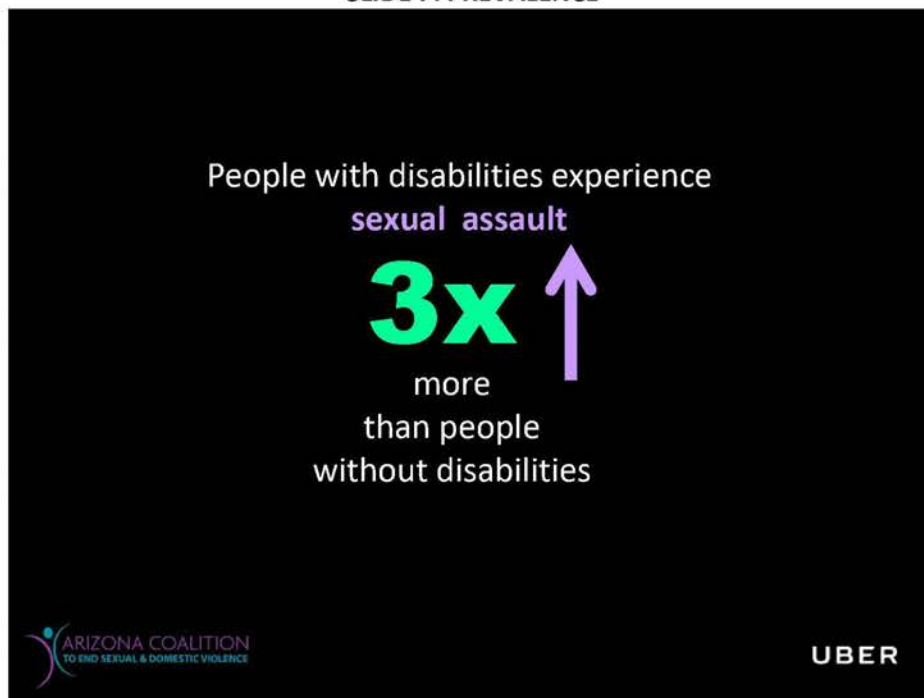
SLIDE 6: PREVALENCE

1 in 2 transgender people
have experienced sexual violence



One-in-two transgender people have experienced sexual violence⁷

SLIDE 7: PREVALENCE



People with disabilities experience sexual assault 3 times more than people without disabilities⁸



“As we can see, this is a population at particular risk for sexual violence.”

Additional information: People with disabilities are most often abused by a caretaker or guardian. These perpetrators have significant access to their victims and usually have a position of power/authority over them. A disability may make someone more vulnerable to victimization, such as an intellectual or developmental disability. Depending on the disability, a victim may have greater difficulty reporting or may be unable to report without assistance.



PREVALENCE RATES IN THE LGB COMMUNITY

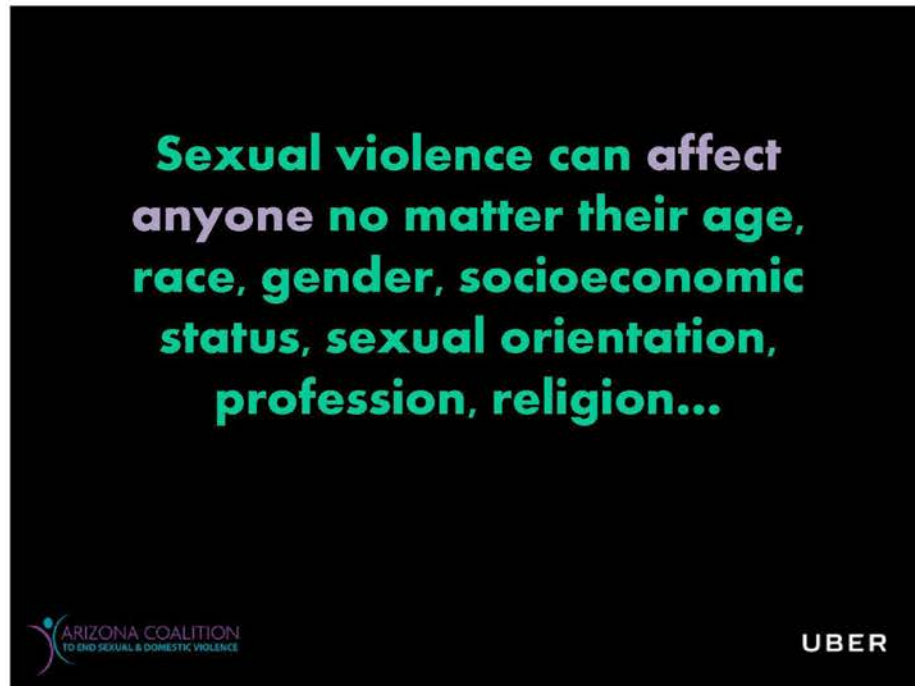
1 in 8 lesbian women have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime⁹

1 in 2 bisexual women have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime⁹

4 in 10 gay men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime⁹

1 in 2 bisexual men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime⁹

SLIDE 8: SCOPE



Sexual violence can affect anyone no matter their age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, profession, or religion...



"There is no one 'type' of sexual assault victim."

Who are the perpetrators?

98% of perpetrators are male

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Who are the perpetrators? 98% of perpetrators are male¹



“Although female sex offenders certainly exist, research has demonstrated that the vast majority of sexual offenders are men.”

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Unit 2: DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Slides 10-12

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to increase understanding about the dynamics of sexual assault and the motivations of perpetrators.

Length: 3 minutes

SLIDE 11: SEXUAL ASSAULT DYNAMICS

**Sexual violence
is about...
power and control**

**Most people are raped by
people they know**

**70% of rapes are
planned...**

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Sexual violence is about power and control

“Sexual violence is not about sexual attraction and gratification. It is an act of power, control, and violence. Sex is used as a weapon to overpower and control another person.”

Most people are raped by people they know

“Although stranger rapes do occur, the majority of sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance or intimate partner. Three-out-of-four sexual assaults are committed by someone who is known to the victim.”¹

70% of rapes are planned

“Rape is not an act of uncontrollable passion—it is an act of violence. Research shows the majority of sexual assaults are actually planned.”²



Most victims are targeted³

“Perpetrators look for victims who are:

- easily accessible (e.g., in close proximity, isolated)
- vulnerable (e.g., intoxicated, alone)
- lacking credibility (most factors that make someone vulnerable also make them appear less credible)

In short, perpetrators look for people who are easily accessible and who are unlikely to be believed if they were to report.”

REFERENCES

- ¹ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 summary report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
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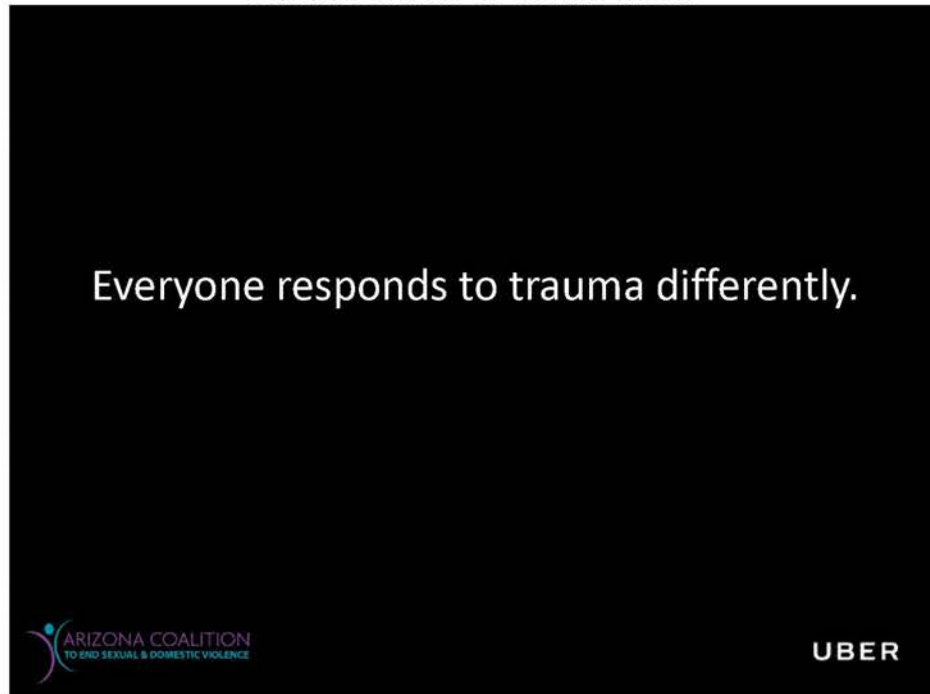
Unit 3: EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION

Slides 13-15

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to understand the neurobiology of trauma and traumatic responses among sexual assault survivors.

Length: 5 minutes

SLIDE 14: EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION



Everyone responds to trauma differently.¹



"It is important to understand that everyone responds to trauma differently. There is no 'right' or 'normal' response.

Some people may cry...some people may be calm...some people may be confused.

This is because trauma causes neurobiological changes in the body."

Neurobiology of Trauma

Neurobiological changes can lead to flat affect, “strange” emotions, or emotional swings (anger)

Memory is often impaired by trauma

Tonic immobility (freezing) during a sexual assault is a autonomic response (uncontrollable)



UBER

DO NOT READ:

Neurobiological changes can lead to flat affect, “strange” emotions, or emotional swings (anger)

BEGIN HERE

“When a person experiences trauma, such as sexual assault, neurobiological changes occur in the brain that affect the way a person behaves and expresses emotions.”



“This is an uncontrollable reaction that will vary from person to person.”



“These changes in the brain may cause the survivor to have no outwardly emotional expressions to the trauma (i.e., flat affect, such as being monotone or stoic).”



“On the other hand, the release of certain stress hormones can cause the survivor to exhibit what some might consider ‘strange’ emotions (e.g., giggling or making light of the situation).”¹



“This does not mean that the survivor is lying or is not affected by the assault—it is simply a neurobiological response to trauma.”

DO NOT READ:
Memory is often impaired by trauma

BEGIN HERE:

“Additionally, after a traumatic event memory is often impaired.”¹



“The survivor might have trouble remembering details about the assault. They may not remember what happened before or after the incident, or they may have trouble remembering the event in a sequential order. This phenomenon has often lead to people thinking sexual assault survivors are lying about the assault.”



“So, if you are speaking with a survivor and they seem confused or are having trouble remembering what happened, it does not mean they are lying—it is a natural response to trauma.”

DO NOT READ:
Tonic immobility (freezing) during a sexual assault is an autonomic response (uncontrollable)

BEGIN HERE

“Lastly, it is common for victims of sexual assault to ‘freeze’ and become immobile during the assault. This also is an uncontrollable response to trauma.”¹



“Most of us have heard about ‘fight’ or ‘flight,’ but most people don’t know that freezing is a common survival response.

Survivors often do not know this, and so they blame themselves for not fighting back.”



“Remember, freezing is an adaptive response to trauma, and the only person responsible for the assault is the perpetrator.”

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¹ Campbell, R. (2012). *The neurobiology of sexual assault*. Retrieved from <http://nij.gov/multimedia/presenter/presenter-campbell/pages/presenter-campbell-transcript.aspx>

Unit 4: RAPE MYTHS AND VICTIM BLAMING

Slides 16-25

Purpose: This purpose of this unit is to identify common rape myths and victim blaming statements in order to recognize and combat biases against sexual assault survivors.

Length: 6 minutes

SLIDE 16: RAPE MYTHS



Rape myths are culturally-supported, inaccurate beliefs that condone the use of sexual violence



"These myths are harmful because they lead people to blame victims for sexual assault, and excuse the behavior of perpetrators."



"We are going to address some of the most common myths."

SLIDE 17: RAPE MYTHS

myth:
Rape is simply a miscommunication between the assailant and victim.

truth:
This is rarely the case. Rapists have admitted knowing the victim was not willing to have sex, and forcing sex anyway.

MYTH:

Rape is simply a miscommunication between the assailant and victim.

TRUTH:

"This is rarely the case.

Remember, rape is about power and control, where sex is used as a weapon against another person.

Research has shown that perpetrators of rape often recognized that their victim did not want to have sex, but forced sex upon them anyway."¹

SLIDE 18: RAPE MYTHS

myth:
**Sexual assault is a one-time-only crime.
Offenders only do it once.**

truth:
**Most rapists have been found to be
repeat offenders, with an average of
six assaults.**

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MYTH:

Sexual assault is a one-time-only crime. Offenders only do it once.

TRUTH:

Most rapists have been found to be repeat offenders, with an average of six assaults.²

Additional information: This statistic comes from a study with a sample of male college students. Participants were given the opportunity to confidentially self-report sexual perpetration.

SLIDE 19: RAPE MYTHS

myth:
People lie about getting raped,
usually to get out of trouble for “bad”
behavior, like affairs.

truth:
Only 2-to-10% of cases of sexual assault
are false reports.

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MYTH:

People lie about getting raped, usually to get out of trouble for “bad” behavior, like affairs.

TRUTH:

“Research has shown that only 2-to-10% of sexual assault cases are false, which is the same rate as other crimes.”³

myth:
Victims provoke sexual assaults
when they dress provocatively or act
in a “promiscuous” manner.

truth:
The only person at fault for a sexual
assault is the perpetrator.

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MYTH:

Victims provoke sexual assaults when they dress provocatively or act in a “promiscuous” manner.

TRUTH:

The only person at fault for a sexual assault is the perpetrator.



“The victim is never responsible for the assault. It does not matter how someone dresses or acts—everyone deserves to be safe.”

SLIDE 21: RAPE MYTHS

myth:
People who do not fight back have not really been raped.

truth:
There are many reasons someone may not fight.
In many cases, fighting back against rapists would mean death for victims.

MYTH:

People who do not fight back have not really been raped.

TRUTH:

There are many reasons someone may not fight back. In many cases, fighting back against rapists would mean death for victims.



“Survivors of sexual assault have reported that they feared for their life during the assault, even if the perpetrator did not have a weapon like a gun or knife. Additionally, as previously discussed, it is common for victims to ‘freeze’ during the assault, which makes fighting back or fleeing impossible.”⁴



“Victim blaming is when people place responsibility on the victim for the crime or wrongdoing committed against them.”



“Survivors of sexual assault are often blamed for their victimization by family, friends, sexual assault responders, and society.”



“As a result, survivors often experience self-blame following an assault.”

Examples:

“I shouldn’t have been drinking so much.”

“I shouldn’t have flirted.”



“Victim blaming can hinder the healing process and prevent people from seeking help or reporting the assault.”⁵



“It is critical that we recognize and interrupt victim blaming attitudes within ourselves and among our peers.”

SLIDE 23: VICTIM BLAMING



Directions: The victim blaming statements can be presented in one of three ways:

- (1) Invite participants to take turns reading the statements aloud
- (2) The facilitator can read them aloud
- (3) The participants can read them to themselves

“I’d like you to take a minute and try and put yourself in the shoes of someone who has just experienced sexual assault.

Now, imagine hearing these things when you tell someone about it.”

Victim Blaming Statements

“You shouldn’t have been out that late.”

“Why did you let him into the house?”

“You shouldn’t have been drinking so much.”

“That’s what happens when you sit in the front seat.”

“If you were really raped, you would remember it.”

“Man up. Just get over it.”

“Why didn’t you fight? I would never let someone do that to me.”

“Whatever dude, you liked it.”

“That’s why you shouldn’t dress like a slut.”

“How would that make you feel?”

[SHORT PAUSE]

“These responses silence victims and discourage them from future disclosures whether it is to family, police, or service providers.”

SLIDE 24: VICTIM BLAMING

Marlborough School: Sex Abuse Victim At Fault For Staying Silent
The L.A. all-girls private school says it isn't liable for a former student's sexual abuse by a teacher because the victim was "negligent and careless."

Katie J.M. Baker
BuzzFeed News Reporter

So you got drunk at a party and two people take advantage of you, that's not rape you're just a loose drunk slut #BiasedResults #Steubenville

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"We also frequently see victim blaming in the media."



READ EXAMPLES:

"Marlborough School: Sex Abuse Victim At Fault For Staying Silent. The L.A. all-girls private school says it isn't liable for a former student's sexual abuse by a teacher because the victim was 'negligent and careless.'"

"Ex-University President Says Women Should Drink Less To Prevent Sex Assault."

"So you got drunk at a party and two people take advantage of you, that's not rape you're just a loose drunk slut."

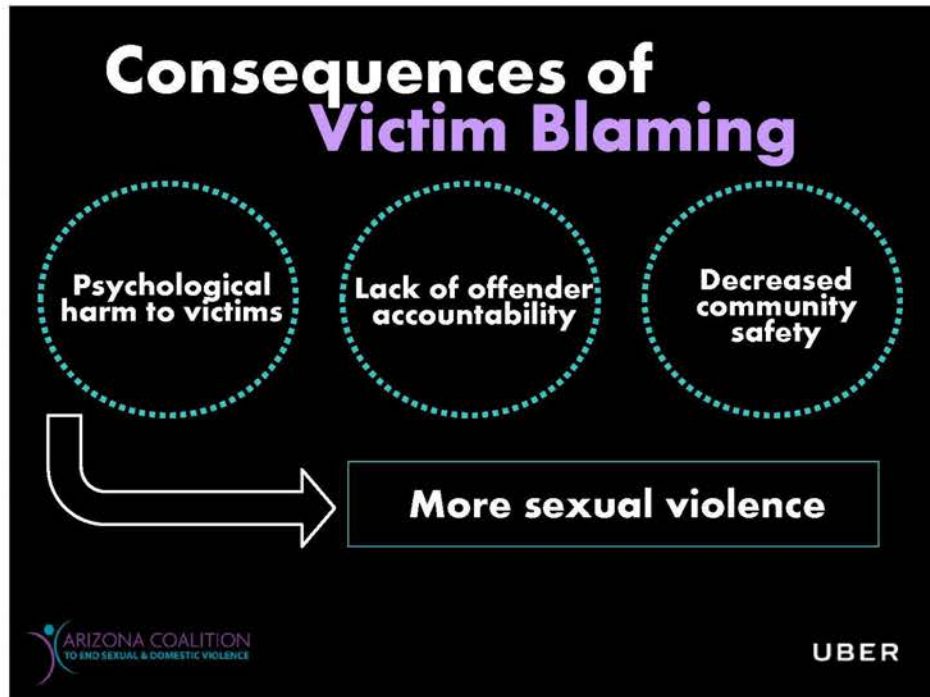


STUBENVILLE CASE:⁶

- High school girl, who was incapacitated by alcohol, was raped by two male peers in Steubenville, West Virginia
- The perpetrators and their friends took videos and pictures and posted them on social media
- Countless victim blaming statements were made through social media
- The perpetrators were convicted in juvenile court for rape



"When we are surrounded by this in the media, how likely is it that a survivor of sexual assault is going to feel comfortable coming forward?"



"There are many negative consequences of victim blaming."



"Victim blaming can cause psychological harm to survivors."

"Survivors who receive a negative response upon disclosure have more severe psychological symptoms, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety."⁷



"When we blame victims, we justify the perpetrator's behavior and fail to hold them accountable."⁷

When we say 'that person was acting like a drunk slut,' we give the perpetrator their excuse. They are going say, 'Well they were acting like a drunk slut.'



"When victims do not feel safe to disclose, and we blame victims instead of perpetrators, our communities are less safe."⁷



"This ultimately results in more sexual violence."

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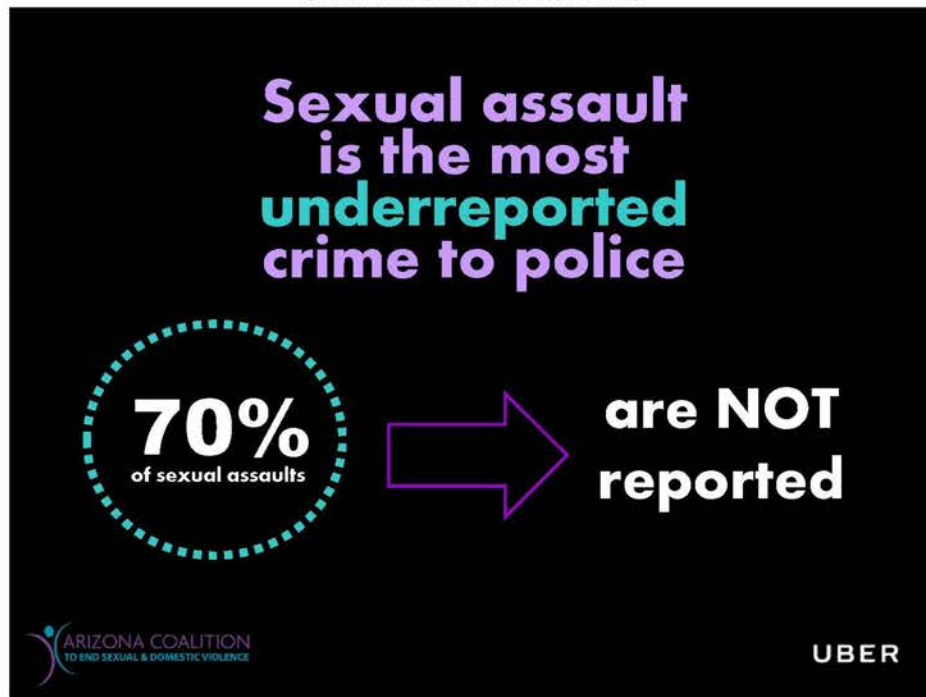
Unit 5: SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING

Slides 26-28

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to examine common barriers to reporting sexual assault to law enforcement.

Length: 5 minutes

SLIDE 27: UNDERREPORTING



Sexual assault is the most underreported crime to police. 70% of sexual assaults are not reported.¹



“There are a number of reasons why this is the case...”

Barriers to Reporting

- Want to forget the experience
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of being blamed
- Fear of retaliation
- Guilt about filing charges against acquaintance/intimate partner
- Disbelief in successful prosecution
- Bad past experience with police



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“Survivors may not want to report to police because...”



[Want to forget the experience²]

“They may want to forget the experience. This may be the worst experience of someone’s life. It’s understandable they may want to try and forget it ever happened. Making a report to police usually means a long process toward achieving justice.”



[Fear of not being believed²]

“They may worry they won’t be believed...”



[Fear of being blamed²]

“...or they fear they’ll be blamed
(e.g., because they were drinking...or flirting...or out late).”



[Fear of retaliation²]

“Survivors often worry about retaliation from the perpetrator or the perpetrator’s friends and family. It is not uncommon that retaliation occurs.”



[Guilt about filing charges against acquaintance/intimate partner²]

“Remember, most rapes are committed by someone known to the victim.
So, they may feel guilty about filing charges against their friend or an intimate partner.”



[Disbelief in a successful prosecution²]

“Survivors may not believe a successful prosecution is likely.
In fact, most cases of sexual assault do not end in a successful prosecution.
This may lead survivors to feel like it is pointless to report and go through the challenging
criminal justice process.”



[Bad past experience with police²]

“The survivor may not have had good experiences with police in the past, or may not trust the
police for a variety of reasons.”



CONCLUSION:

“These are just a few reasons why someone might be uncomfortable reporting to anyone,
but especially to law enforcement.
So if someone is not ready to report to the police, that’s okay.
It’s their decision to make, and because we don’t know their situation, it is not our
responsibility to encourage them one way or the other.”

REFERENCES

- ¹ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014* (2015); ii. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2014* (2015); iii. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2014* (2015); iv. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 2009* (2013).
- ² Sable, M. R., Danis, F., Mauzy, D. L., & Gallagher, S. K. (2006). Barriers to reporting sexual assault for women and men: Perspectives of college students. *Journal of American College Health, 55*(3), 157-162.

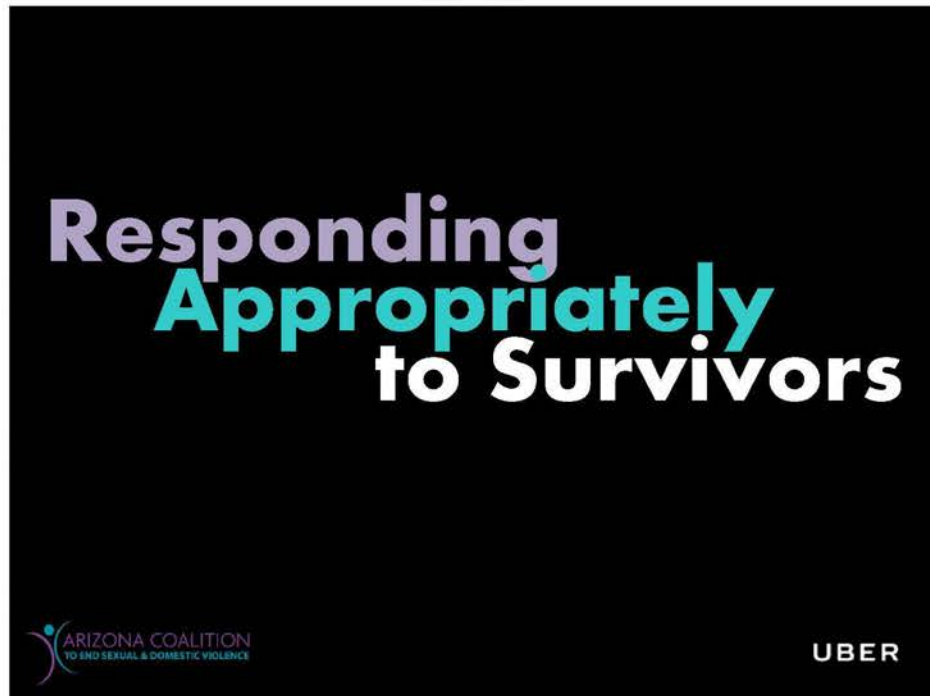
Unit 6: RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO SURVIVORS

Slides 29-37

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to provide participants with best practices on appropriately responding to survivors of sexual assault.

Length: 10 minutes

SLIDE 29



INTRODUCTION:

“The first response is critical to the survivor’s wellbeing.
It can make the difference as to whether to seek additional help or report to the police.
It takes considerable courage for someone to disclose.
Think about all the barriers we have discussed, and everything a survivor has had to overcome to be talking to you.
They are deserving of your respect.”

Be prepared

Be prepared for any type of emotional reaction
Your emotions can guide the survivor's emotions
Breathe and stay calm



Do not seem cold or unapproachable
Avoid extreme emotions (fear, anger, sadness)



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Be prepared for any type of emotional reaction

"Remember, everyone reacts to trauma differently.

The survivor could be crying, they may be calm, they may be angry and yelling at you.
Their emotions may fluctuate throughout the call."



Your emotions can guide the survivor's emotions

"If you are expressing sadness, anger, or fear, you can trigger or enhance those feelings for the survivor. If you remain calm, it can have a calming effect on the caller."



Breathe and stay calm

"So, it is critical that you breathe and stay calm, but don't be cold or unapproachable."

Listen

Engage in active listening
Listen with empathy
Be patient
Spend more time listening than speaking

 Do not interrupt survivors' sentences
Do not become counselor/advocate

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Engage in active listening and listen with empathy

“Active listening over the phone can be difficult. It is important to let the survivor know they have your full attention. This can be achieved through periodically affirming their statements.”

Examples:

‘Mmhmm’ ‘Okay’ ‘I understand’



Be patient

“Be patient with survivors. They may cry, yell, or even curse at you. These are reactions to trauma and should not be taken personally.”

“They may also have difficulty remembering details, or say things that do not make sense, or have difficulty expressing themselves and explaining the situation to you.”

“Just be patient and reassure them you are listening without judgment.”



Spend more time listening than speaking



Be careful not to interrupt survivors' sentences

"This can feel insensitive and as though you are not taking the report seriously. Wait until there is a pause, or find an appropriate time to interject with questions or information that will guide the conversation to its conclusion."



Do not become a counselor/advocate

"Remember, you are not a trained counselor or advocate. Trying to take on that role could be harmful to survivors. Your responsibility is to respond to the caller with compassion and respect, and within the limits of your job duties."

Tone

Low and even
Calm
Serious/concerned
Compassionate



Avoid speaking too slow or too fast
Do not seem “cheerful”



Low and even

“Speak in a low and even tone.

Be conscious of the volume of your voice—especially avoid speaking loudly, because that can be triggering for survivors.

Try not to speak too slow or too fast.”



Calm

“Maintain a calm tone and demeanor throughout the call, regardless of the caller’s response.”



Serious/concerned

“It is important that your tone conveys that you are taking the report seriously. You don’t want to sound too cheerful or friendly, because that is incongruous to the survivor’s experience.

The caller should feel that you are concerned about their report and will handle it appropriately and professionally.”



Compassionate

“Finally, always speak with kindness and compassion.”

Response

Be thoughtful about your responses
Respond in a nonjudgmental manner

 **Avoid “why” questions**
Do not ask unnecessary details
Do not question the validity of the survivor’s experience

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UBER

Be thoughtful about your responses

“As we begin to discuss responses, it is critical that you always think before you speak.

Avoid overly reactive or emotional responses (e.g., ‘Oh my God!’ or gasping).

Think about what you are going to say and the impact it may have on the caller.”



Respond in a nonjudgmental manner

“The most important thing you can do is respond in a nonjudgmental manner. The caller should feel believed and not blamed. This means...”



Avoid “why” questions

“Why did you let him in the house?”

“Why didn’t you get out of the car?”

“These questions sound very blaming and challenging, and it isn’t information you need to know.

Which brings us to the point...”



Do not ask unnecessary details

“You are not the police or a healthcare provider.

It is not your job to investigate what happened or assess the caller’s health.

Get only the minimum of information you need to know to respond within the parameters of your job.”



Do not question the validity of the survivor's experience

"Avoid statements that may convey disbelief, such as..."

"That doesn't make sense."

"Remember, what survivors say may not make sense at first—that's a common response to trauma. If clarification is needed, a better response is:"

"Could you please explain that again? I want to make sure I'm understanding correctly."



"You also want to avoid saying things like..."

"Really?"

"I can't believe they did that!"

"These are things we commonly say when we are talking with our friends, and it is something we do to encourage conversation."

"However, to someone who has experienced trauma, this may come across as though you aren't believing them."

SLIDE 34: RESPONDING TO SURVIVORS

Response

Validate the survivor's feelings

"That's terrible." "I understand why you would feel that way."

"That's understandable." "I don't blame you."

"I believe you." "That makes sense."

 Do not minimize the assault
Do not say "it will be okay"
Do not make excuses for the perpetrator

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"In order to reduce trauma, it is important that we validate the survivor's feelings."

A CALLER MIGHT SAY...	YOU CAN SAY...
"I was raped."	"That's terrible."
"I'm so upset, I don't know what to do."	"That's okay, that's understandable."
"I'm really afraid they're going to do this to someone else."	"I understand why you would feel that way."
"I was too scared to do anything."	"I don't blame you."
"I was being friendly, but I wasn't flirting or anything."	"I believe you."
"I feel like I need some time to think about whether I want to call the police."	"That makes sense."

↓

"The phrases shown here are ones you can repeat throughout the call, as necessary."

Do not minimize the assault

"It is important not to minimize the assault."

Examples:

"Well, it sounds like it could have been a lot worse."

"Thank goodness that's all that happened."

"We can see how this may come across as insensitive to survivors and dismissive of the severity of their experience."



Do not say "it will be okay"

"You do not know if this is true, and it can come across as minimizing or patronizing."



Do not make excuses for the perpetrator

Example:

"It sounds like there might have been a misunderstanding."

"There is no excuse for sexually assaulting someone."

Response

Let survivors make their own decisions

“What would you like to do?”

“Here’s what I can do...”

“Unfortunately, I’m not able to do that.”

 **Avoid “should” statements**
Do not tell the survivor what they must do

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“It is important to let survivors make their own decisions.”

“Sexual assault is about taking power and control away from someone, and it can be revictimizing if a responder doesn’t give the survivor the freedom to express their needs and make their own choices.

So ask them what they would like to do, and respect the answer.

It doesn’t matter what you think they should do.

Be honest about what you can and cannot do for them.”



Avoid ‘should’ statements

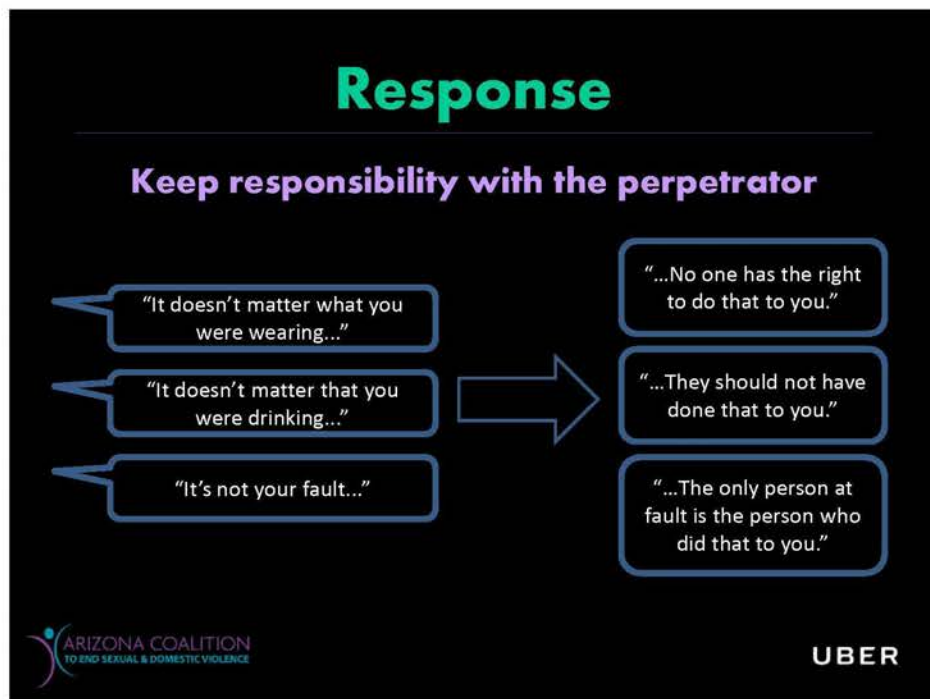
Example:

“You should report this to the police.”



“That is their decision to make.

They have their own reasons for wanting to report or not.”



INTRODUCTION:

“As we’ve discussed, it is common for survivors to engage in self-blame, and they may say things like:

‘I knew I shouldn’t have worn this.’

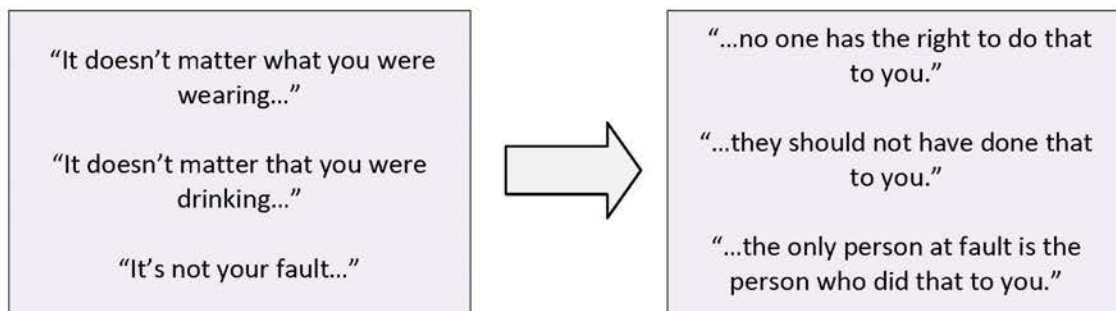
‘This is all my fault—I shouldn’t have been drinking so much.’

It is critical to survivors’ wellbeing that we do not validate self-blaming statements.”



Keep responsibility with the perpetrator

“You can respond to self-blaming statements by saying things like...”



Response

Reassurance

Assure the caller their report will be handled appropriately

Referral

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673



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[Reassurance]

“Let the caller know you will handle their report appropriately.”

[Referral]

“Refer the caller to the National Sexual Assault Hotline, where they can speak to someone about their options for reporting and services.”

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