

**Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in  
Correctional Settings  
Notification of Curriculum Utilization  
December 2013**

The enclosed *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum was developed by The Moss Group, Inc. (TMG) as part of contract deliverables for the National PREA Resource Center (PRC), a cooperative agreement between the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The PREA standards served as the basis for the curriculum's content and development with the goal of the *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum to satisfy specific PREA standard requirements.

It is recommended that the *Specialized Training: Investigating Sexual Abuse in Correctional Settings* curriculum be reviewed in its entirety before choosing which modules to use. Any alterations to the original materials must be acknowledged during their presentation or requires removal of the PRC and TMG logos.

BJA is currently undergoing a comprehensive review of the enclosed curriculum for official approval at which point the BJA logo may be added.

*Note: Utilization of the enclosed curriculum, either in part or whole, does not guarantee that an auditor will find a facility "meets standard". Rather, an auditor will take into consideration the curriculum used as part of their overall determination of compliance.*





## Module 4: Trauma and Victim Responses: Considerations for the Investigative Process

**Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (1 hour)**

### Training Objectives:


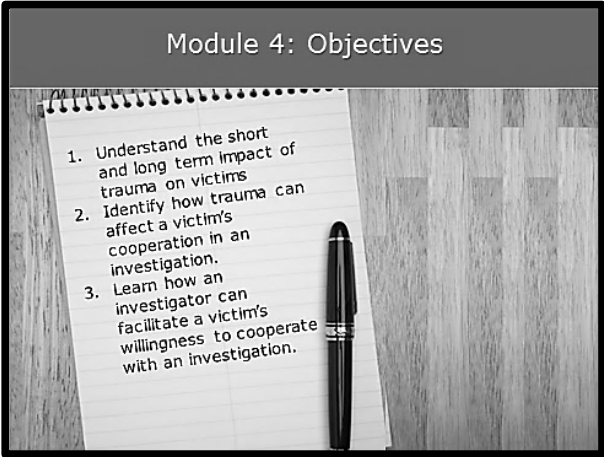

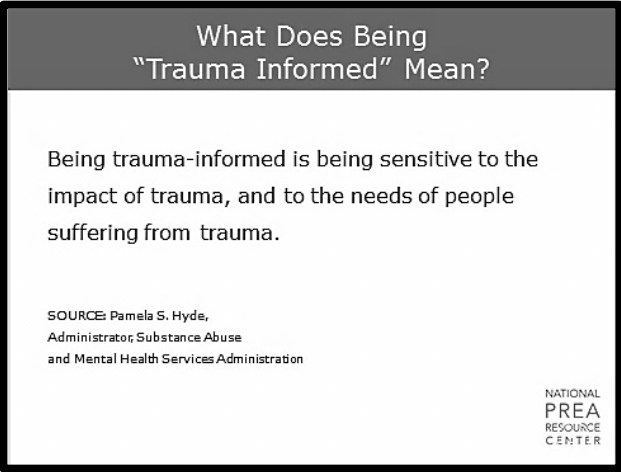


1. Understand the short and long term impact of trauma on victims.
2. Identify how trauma can affect a victim's cooperation in an investigation.
3. Learn how an investigator can facilitate a victim's willingness to cooperate with an investigation.



### Materials Needed:

1. Easel pad and markers
2. PowerPoint® player/machine (lap top computer and LCD projector)
3. Screen or monitor
4. Handout: Scenario

### Training Tips:

- This module is intended to help investigators understand why being informed about the effects of trauma on victims will help them conduct more thorough investigations.
- Throughout the training, emphasize that a victim's responses to trauma are not impacted by their status as an offender – they are not less traumatized because of their criminal history. Therefore, it is very important for investigators to understand how sexual abuse victims react and to adjust their approaches accordingly.
- It would be helpful for the trainer to enlist the support of a medical or mental health professional who is educated on the effects of trauma and the responses of sexual abuse victims, either in preparation or in the delivery of the module.

Time	Lecture Notes	Teaching Tips
	<p align="center"><b>Trauma and Victim Responses: Consideration for the Investigative Process</b></p>	
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Objectives</b></p> 	 <p><b>Objectives</b></p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>What Does Being “Trauma Informed” Mean?</b></p>  <p>Being trauma-informed is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive to the impact of trauma and to the needs of people suffering from trauma.</li> <li>• Extremely important when dealing with victims of sexual abuse.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>What Does Being “Trauma Informed” Mean?</b></p> <p>SOURCE: Pamela S. Hyde, Administrator, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Why Does Trauma Matter?</b></p>	

	<div data-bbox="415 191 1049 674" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center; background-color: #555; color: white; padding: 5px;">Why Does Trauma Matter?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>serious, short- and long-term impacts on mental and physical health</li> <li>impacts reporting and interactions with investigators.</li> <li>a high percentage of inmates/residents have experienced trauma in their lives prior to incarceration</li> </ul> <p style="margin-top: 10px;"><i>Investigators working in corrections need to be aware of the impact of trauma on the current mental and physical health of trauma survivors to be able to understand and work with them safely and effectively.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Investigators working in corrections need to be aware of the impact of trauma on the mental and physical health of trauma survivors in order to understand and work with them safely and effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trauma has very serious, short- and long-term impacts on the mental and physical health of men and women.</li> <li>Victims of sexual abuse have experienced highly traumatic events that may impact how and when they report and their subsequent interactions with investigators.</li> <li>A high percentage of inmates have experienced trauma (sexual, physical and emotional) in their lives prior to incarceration, which may have an impact on their perceptions of others and of you.</li> </ul> <p>This will be important to remember both in investigating incidents of sexual abuse and in working with inmates/residents generally.</p>	
<p><b>15 min</b></p>	<p><b>Why Does Trauma Matter?</b></p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Why Does Trauma Matter?</b></p>  <p>Play video to 14:43</p> </div>

1 min

### Neurobiology of Trauma



**Neurobiology of Trauma**

Trauma has been proven to have significant and very real effects on the victims and their brain functioning

- Disrupts the stress-hormone system that is regulated by the brain
- Stays “stuck” in the brain’s subconscious (limbic system, brain stem, etc) where they are inaccessible by the conscious areas (frontal lobe, etc.)
- Can result in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER

The ACE findings are also applicable to trauma experienced later in life. The biological impact of trauma on the brain is demonstrable and long-lasting. An experience that is perceived by the victim to be life-threatening will disrupt the stress-hormone system of the brain.

- Traumatic events stay “stuck” in the brain’s subconscious (limbic system, brain stem, etc.) where they are inaccessible by the conscious areas (frontal lobe, etc.)
- Trauma can result in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

1 min


### Neurobiology of Trauma





**Neurobiology of Trauma**

NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER

We’re going to briefly discuss how that works. Here’s an image of the brain to give you an idea of what we’re talking about. The frontal lobe is shown here in red, the limbic system is shown in blue, and the brain stem is shown in yellow.

<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Trauma and the Brain</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #555; color: white; padding: 5px;"><b>Trauma and the Brain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frontal lobe: seat of conscious memory, chronological information</li> <li>Limbic system: controls emotion, fear response, sensory memories</li> <li>Brain stem: controls instinctive reactions (fight/flight/freeze)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frontal lobe: seat of conscious brain. Controls memory, chronological information</li> <li>Limbic system: controls emotion, fear response, sensory memories</li> <li>Brain stem: controls instinctive reactions (fight/flight/freeze)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Limbic System</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #555; color: white; padding: 5px;"><b>Limbic System</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controls the senses, emotions</li> <li>Includes amygdala, hippocampus</li> <li>During a traumatic event, amygdala might depress hippocampus function and make an individual unable to remember all or part of the events</li> <li>Traumatized individuals might be more able to answer sensory questions than ones about the specific events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>What did you see?</b></li> <li><b>What did you hear?</b></li> <li><b>What did you taste?</b></li> <li><b>NOT: What happened?</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Let's talk about two parts of the limbic system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Amygdala</u>: small region of the limbic system that plays a primary role in the formation and storage of memories associated with emotional events.</li> <li>It is also where the response to those emotions starts: increase in heart rate, respiration, and stress-hormone release.</li> <li>Trauma can cause the amygdala to become</li> </ul>	

	<p>hypersensitive and trigger those responses to normal stimuli. Reminders of trauma can also spark that reaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Hippocampus</u>: processes all conscious memory.</li> <li>• Highly sensitive to the stress-hormones released by the amygdala.</li> </ul> <p>This means that when the amygdala is active, it interferes with the victim’s ability to remember events.</p>	
<p><b>2 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Frontal Lobe</b></p> <div data-bbox="415 554 1049 1033" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #cccccc; margin: 0;"><b>Frontal Lobe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for conscious memory and verbal skills</li> <li>• Helps an individual put events in order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Takes time after a traumatic event – may make the interviewee unable to recall events accurately soon after trauma</li> </ul> </li> <li>• During trauma this can become dissociated from the rest of the brain, preventing a victim from remembering or preventing them from speaking about their memories</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small; margin: 0;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Similarly, the frontal lobe may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become dissociated from the rest of the brain during times of trauma</li> <li>• Need time after a traumatic event to accurately recall events. If that time is not allowed, a victim may have trouble remembering or speaking about the events.</li> </ul> <p>For example, if an officer is assaulted by an offender and reacts as trained, he/she:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not have much memory of his/her actions.</li> <li>• May remember the initial assault and defense, <u>but</u></li> <li>• May not remember striking the offender five times after that.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3 min</b></p>	<p><b>Trauma and the Brain: What does this mean for investigators?</b></p>	

## Trauma and the Brain: What does this mean for investigators?

- Victims of trauma may have incomplete or imperfect memories of the events surrounding their trauma, or may only recall events with time
- "Cognitive interviewing" – focusing first on the sensory experience (touch, taste, smell, hearing) can help an interviewee to remember
- Recalling traumatic events may re-trigger the emotional parts of the brain and force the victim to relive aspects of the trauma. Be sensitive to this during the interview process.

NATIONAL  
PREA  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

So, if the amygdala depresses the functioning of the hippocampus during a traumatic event, this will impede a victim's ability to remember what happened or the chronology of those events. As an investigator, it is important to recognize that

- A victim who is unable to clearly remember an incident of sexual abuse may be suffering from the impact of trauma.
- Focusing on questions concerning sensory memories (i.e., sight, smell, hearing) may be more effective than questions on chronology of events
- A reminder of the trauma may re-trigger these processes, forcing the victim to re-live aspects of the trauma.

Avoid repetitive interviews where the victim is required to repeat their account of events. You should also provide victims with the time they need to fully communicate their information. A victim advocate may also assist in this.

1 min

### Implications: How to be Trauma Informed



*SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?"  
by Joan Gillece,  
PhD*



## Implications: How to be Trauma Informed

A trigger is something that sets off an action, process, or series of events (such as fear, panic, upset, agitation) because a trauma survivor experiences a traumatic memory.

*Why is it important to understand triggers?*

- To understand why an inmate/resident may respond in a certain way to your appearance / demeanor / actions and, if possible, avoid that response.
- To better reconstruct the events that occurred during an alleged incident of sexual abuse.

SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?"  
by Joan Gillette, PhD

NATIONAL  
PREA  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

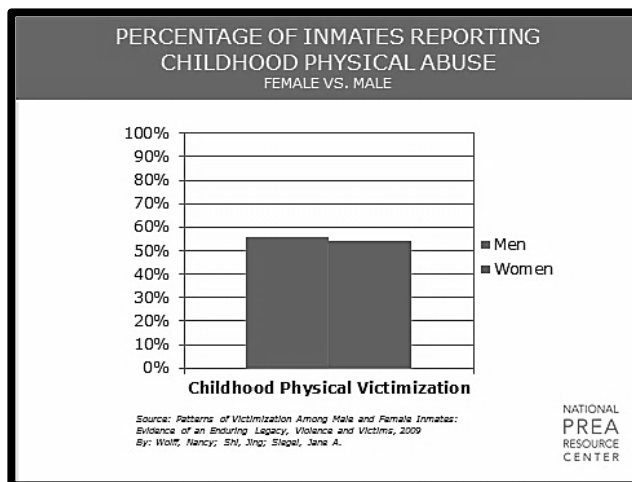
A trigger is something that sets off an action, process, or series of events. It reminds the victim of his/her trauma and sets off a flashback or intense feeling of fear, panic or agitation. You can trigger a victim by something you say, something you do or even by your appearance.

Why is it important to understand triggers?

- To understand why an inmate/resident may respond in a certain way to your appearance/demeanor/actions and, if possible, avoid that response.
- To better reconstruct the events that occurred during an alleged incident of sexual abuse.

1 min

## Percentage of Inmates Reporting Childhood Physical Abuse



As you can see on the slide, many of the inmates/residents with whom you work have experienced traumatic events in their lives, regardless of whether they have reported an incident of sexual



abuse during their incarceration.

You may witness these trauma symptoms in other types of investigations you conduct. You may be able to use skills from this training in work that is not directly related to sexual abuse. Additionally, remember that abuse histories are not unique to offenders; staff being interviewed may have similar histories and may demonstrate similar symptoms of trauma or PTSD.

**1 min**

**Percentages of Inmates Reporting Childhood Sexual Abuse**

Gender	Percentage
Men	~10%
Women	~45%

Source: *Patterns of Victimization Among Male and Female Inmates: Evidence of an Enduring Legacy, Violence and Victims, 2009*  
By: Wolff, Nancy; Siv, Jing; Stolpe, Jane A.

NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER

Women and girls in the criminal justice system have particularly significant trauma histories, as many of them have experienced sexual abuse prior to incarceration.



**2 min**

**Impact of Sexual Abuse**

Incidents of sexual abuse are destructive, catastrophic, life-changing events. While each victim responds uniquely, victims are likely to experience problems that are:

- physical
- emotional
- cognitive
- psychological
- social
- sexual

Source: Dumond, R.W. & Dumond, D.A. (2007a). *Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.


NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER


Sexual abuse is catastrophic. It is life changing.

- It can impact the victim’s physical, emotional, cognitive, psychological, social and sexual health.

*SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. & Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the aftermath of sexual abuse, a victim may experience physical trauma directly related to the victimization experience; medical issues including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, and other communicable diseases; pregnancy (for women); and psychological trauma including anxiety, depression, PTSD or rape trauma syndrome, dissociative disorders, and exacerbation of pre-existing psychiatric problems.</li> </ul> <p>The physical trauma, medical issues, and possibility of pregnancy will be addressed by the medical personnel and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) at your facilities or in your community. The victim will also have access to mental health practitioners.</p> <p>However, it is extremely important for the investigator of a sexual abuse case to be aware of the psychological ramifications of trauma. Knowing these ramifications can assist an investigator in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interacting with the victim in a way that will enhance their willingness and ability to fully participate in the investigation and</li> <li>• Interacting with the victim in a way that facilitates the healing process or, at the very least, does not cause further harm.</li> </ul>	<p><i>SOURCE: A Guide to An Effective Medical Response to Prisoner Sexual Violence (Monograph for Colorado Department of Public Safety – Dumond &amp; Dumond, 2007)</i></p>
--	--	---

<p><b>3 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Impact of Sexual Abuse</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #444; color: white; padding: 5px;"><b>Impact of Sexual Abuse</b></p> <p>What you may see from the victim -- within hours of abuse:</p> <p>Being very expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearing hysterical and/or verbalizing feelings of sadness or anger.</li> <li>• Displaying a range of feelings, including crying, sobbing, smiling, restlessness, tenseness, &amp; joking.</li> <li>• Appearing distraught or anxious; expressing rage or hostility against those attempting to care for them.</li> </ul> <p>Remaining controlled, numb, in shock &amp; disbelief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masking or hiding feelings behind a calm, composed, or subdued effect.</li> <li>• Presenting themselves in a flat affect, quiet, reserved manner.</li> <li>• Having difficulties expressing themselves.</li> </ul> <p><small>SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</small></p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;"><b>NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</b></p> </div> <p>During an incident of sexual abuse, a victim experiences a total lack of control. They experience pain and feel that their lives are being threatened. Following an incident, victims are often in a</p>	 <p><i>Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</i></p>
---------------------	--	--

	<p>state of shock, disbelief, or panic.</p> <p>In the short- and long-term following an incident, victims may become</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressed,</li> <li>• Anxious, and,</li> <li>• If symptoms do not fade with time, may be diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).</li> </ul> <p>Victims of sexual abuse are significantly more likely to attempt suicide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are four times more likely than non-crime victims to have contemplated suicide.</li> <li>• They are fourteen times more likely than victims of other types of crimes to have actually attempted suicide.</li> </ul> <p>If you interact with a victim immediately after an incident of sexual abuse, victims may demonstrate a range of reactions. Some will be extremely emotional. These emotions may range from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hysteria, sadness, anger, and hostility to</li> <li>• Restlessness, tenseness, and even joking.</li> </ul> <p>Other victims may demonstrate no emotion at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They may be numb, in shock, or have difficulty expressing themselves.</li> <li>• Others may not be comfortable expressing emotion and therefore may appear totally calm, composed and quiet.</li> </ul> <p>All of these reactions are perfectly normal. Do not expect a sexual abuse victim to act in any particular way. Also, do not make snap judgments concerning the validity of a report/account based on the mannerisms of the person talking about it.</p>	<p><i>Allison, J.A. &amp; Wrightsman, L.S. (1993). Rape: The misunderstood crime. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications and Dumond,</i></p> <p><i>Robert W. &amp; Dumond, Doris A. (2002). The treatment of sexual assault victims. In C. Hensley (Ed.), Prison sex: Practice and policy. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Chapter 5, pp. 67-88</i></p>
<p><b>2 min</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Impact of Sexual Abuse</b></p>	 <p><i>SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond,</i></p>

## Impact of Sexual Abuse

What you may see from the victim – short-term:

- *Phobias* -- preoccupation with personal safety, reluctance to leave room/home, fear of being alone, withdrawal from activities or relationships
- *Mood swings* -- happy to angry, anxiety, sense of helplessness, irritability or outburst of anger, difficulty concentrating, crying frequently hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle reactions.
- *Denial* -- efforts to deny abuse took place and/or minimize impact, avoiding thoughts or activities associated with trauma.
- *Hesitation* in forming new relationships.
- *Flashbacks* -- intense psychological or physiological distress at exposure to cues associated with the traumatic event.

SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. & Dumond, D.A. (2007a). *Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety.* Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.

NATIONAL  
PREA  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

*D.A. (2007a).  
Managing prison  
sexual violence: A  
guide to effective  
victim services.  
Building Blocks for  
Institutional Safety.  
Denver, CO:  
Colorado  
Department of  
Public Safety,  
Division of Criminal  
Justice, Office of  
Research &  
Statistics.*

Victims of sexual abuse will experience a range of emotions in the weeks following the incident. They may experience

- Re-traumatization due to “triggers” in their environment.
- Shock, denial, humiliation, self-doubt, guilt, shame, self-blame, depression, and self-hatred.
- Anger, a desire for revenge, or suicidal thoughts.


Remember that victims have experienced a significant feeling of powerlessness and may feel anxious and fearful. Finding ways to allow the victim to feel in control will contribute to the victim’s comfort and will increase the likelihood of an effective investigation.

Following the first few weeks, victims may develop

- Fear of being alone or being around others.
- Significant changes in behavior.
- Disinterest in activities they previously enjoyed.
- Mood swings.
- Difficulty concentrating.

Victims and may also become hyper-vigilant or be easily startled. Many victims also go through periods of denial, which may influence their reporting of the incident.

They may be hesitant to form new relationships and may not trust new people they meet, including you, the investigator.

	<p>Finally, they may experience flashbacks that cause intense distress and are triggered by reminders of the trauma.</p>	
<p>2 min</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Impact of Sexual Abuse</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #cccccc; margin: 0;"><b>Impact of Sexual Abuse</b></p> <p>Victims may negatively cope with their victimization in the long-term by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dulling their senses with substances.</li> <li>• Acting out their pain by re-victimizing others within the correctional institution or in the community.</li> <li>• Being self-destructive.</li> <li>• Displaying anger towards the offender, legal system, family/friends</li> <li>• Displaying hyper vigilance to danger.</li> <li>• Being fearful of new &amp; risky situations.</li> <li>• Experience sexual dysfunction, engaging in sexual behavior, but with decreased or increased enjoyment and arousal.</li> <li>• Engaging in sexually promiscuous and/or aggressive behavior.</li> </ul> <p>Remember – you may encounter victims at all stages depending on when they came forward to report the abuse!</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">SOURCES: Dumond &amp; Dumond, 2002; Lockwood, Daniel. (1980). <i>Prison Sexual Violence</i>. New York: Elsevia/Thomond Books and Wooden, WS &amp; Parker, J. (1982). <i>Men behind bars: Sexual exploitation in prison</i>. New York: Plenum Press.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small; margin: 0;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>In the long-term, if a victim is unable to cope with the symptoms in the aftermath of a trauma, she or he may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn to alcohol or drug use.</li> <li>• Act out and become aggressors themselves.</li> <li>• Become self-destructive.</li> <li>• Develop post-traumatic stress disorder.</li> </ul> <p>For those victims who experienced abuse within the correctional system, they may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display strong feelings of anger towards the system as a whole, or towards people who are trying to help them.</li> <li>• Continue to be hyper-vigilant to danger and feel anxious and fearful about new situations.</li> <li>• Change their view of sexual activity, impacting their ability to enjoy it or resulting in promiscuous or aggressive sexual behavior.</li> </ul> <p>Victims of sexual abuse may report at any point after the incident – hours later or years later - though many never report at all. In your interactions with inmates/residents, be aware of how trauma may impact their behavior and the way your interaction with a victim may impact their desire or ability to cooperate with an investigation.</p>	 <p><i>SOURCES: Dumond &amp; Dumond, 2002; Lockwood, Daniel. (1980). <b>Prison Sexual Violence</b>. New York: Elsevia/Thomond Books and Wooden, WS &amp; Parker, J. (1982). <b>Men behind bars: Sexual exploitation in prison</b>. New York: Plenum Press.</i></p>

Similarly, be aware of the impact of trauma more generally. Do not just apply your knowledge of trauma to cases involving sexual abuse. Use this knowledge in other cases that may involve elements of sexual abuse that you are not aware of, or when interacting with inmates/residents who may have suffered from sexual abuse at some point in lives previous to incarceration.

1 min

**Impact of Sexual Abuse: Corrections**

**Impact of Sexual Abuse: Corrections**

Incarcerated sexual abuse victims :

- may experience repetitive assaults by multiple assailants over a period of time.

This may lead to:

- on-going physical and psychological trauma,
- a more debilitating form of PTSD.

Incarcerated victims may also experience:

- a loss of social status, and
- increased vulnerability within the jail or prison,
- additional feelings of betrayal, alienation and violation, which increases pain and suffering in cases of staff sexual misconduct.

NATIONAL  
PREA  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

SOURCE: A Guide to An Effective Medical Response to Prisoner Sexual Violence  
{Monograph for Colorado Department of Public Safety – Dumond & Dumond, 2007}



*SOURCE: A Guide to An Effective Medical Response to Prisoner Sexual Violence {Monograph for Colorado Department of Public Safety – Dumond & Dumond, 2007}*

Sexual abuse in corrections is unique due to the setting in which it takes place. Victims of sexual abuse in corrections

- May experience repetitive assaults by multiple assailants over a period of time.
- Are confined to the location of the sexual abuse and cannot escape the environment of people that caused them harm.


This level of trauma is debilitating and can lead to severe and chronic Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Sexual abuse in corrections can impact the victim’s social status and safety within the facility and may impact the victim’s trust in the system as a whole.

Sexual harassment can also be as traumatizing as sexual abuse in incarcerated settings. It may be repetitive, graphic, demoralizing, and vulgar. Sexual harassment can be even more difficult to prove than sexual abuse.



1 min

**Impact of Sexual Abuse: Men**



	<div data-bbox="423 191 1040 663" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center; background-color: #444; color: white; padding: 5px;">Impact of Sexual Abuse: Men</h3> <p>In addition to the previously discussed symptoms, male victims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May experience erection and orgasm during anal rape due to the pressure on the prostate, which compounds the trauma and exacerbates self-blame.</li> <li>• Often experience concern about their masculinity, competence and security, which increases their humiliation and suffering.</li> <li>• Often manifest a more "controlled" response, which may lead authorities to conclude the events did not occur or to minimize its impact.</li> </ul> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;">SOURCE: A Guide to An Effective Medical Response to Prisoner Sexual Violence (Monograph for Colorado Department of Public Safety – Dumond &amp; Dumond, 2007)</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small; margin-top: 0;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men and boys in particular may experience heightened levels of shame, humiliation, and self-blame due to their perceptions of a loss of masculinity.</li> <li>• This is particularly true in cases of anal rape in which the victim experiences an erection.</li> <li>• Males may present a more controlled response when reporting as well, which can cause authorities to take the reports less seriously or not believe the report at all.</li> </ul>	<p><i>SOURCE: A Guide to An Effective Medical Response to Prisoner Sexual Violence {Monograph for Colorado Department of Public Safety – Dumond &amp; Dumond, 2007}</i></p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<div data-bbox="423 1079 1040 1551" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center; background-color: #444; color: white; padding: 5px;">Impact of Sexual Abuse: Women</h3> <p>In addition to the previously discussed symptoms, incarcerated female victims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a much higher rate of physical and sexual victimization during childhood, adolescence and prior to their incarceration, resulting in increased vulnerability to PTSD.</li> <li>• Have histories of abuse and submission reinforce feelings of inadequacy, despair and unworthiness.</li> <li>• May experience compounded expectations of betrayal and anger resulting from incest victimization during childhood in cases of staff sexual misconduct.</li> </ul> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;">SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small; margin-top: 0;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>The women and girls with whom you will work in corrections have extremely high rates of physical and sexual victimization in their pasts. These histories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May increase feelings of despair and inadequacy, and</li> <li>• May inhibit their ability to identify sexual abuse in their relationships.</li> </ul>	<div data-bbox="1192 1037 1300 1108" style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p><i>SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</i></p>

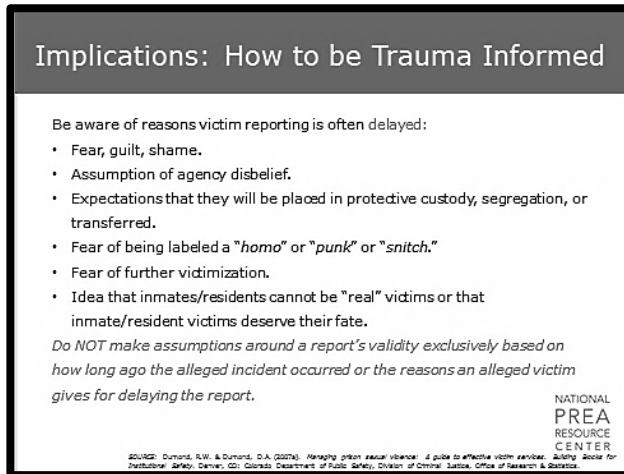


	<p>In cases of staff sexual misconduct, women may suffer from particularly strong feelings of betrayal if they experienced incest victimization in childhood.</p>	
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications</b></p> <p>What does this mean for investigations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the background, history, and the potential for ongoing trauma and mental health issues will allow investigators to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understand inmates/residents' actions, reactions and interpretations of events.</li> <li>• Better reconstruct inmates/residents' actions and reactions.</li> <li>• Positively impact the healing process of inmates/residents who have recently experienced trauma through sexual abuse.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>What does this mean for investigations? Be aware</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the histories of the inmates/residents with whom you are working and how that may impact their perception of events within the facility.</li> <li>• Behaviors that may seem bizarre or inexplicable to you may be coping mechanisms for trauma.</li> </ul> <p>To fully understand an allegation and determine the validity of it, an investigator needs to attempt to understand the mindset of the inmates/residents with whom they work.</p>	
<p><b>10 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p>Do no harm in your interactions with victims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of your power to cause a "second injury," through:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Perceived rejection/disbelief</li> <li>– Perceived indifference, or lack of support</li> <li>– Projections (conscious or unconscious) of blame on the victim</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Be aware of your power to discourage reporting and cooperation, which may result in:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A loss of crucial information in a case,</li> <li>– A decrease in facility safety, and</li> <li>– Increased agency liability.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="font-size: x-small;">SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). <i>Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety</i>. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Understand that you can do harm to the victims with whom you work. You can avoid doing harm by</p>	 <p><i>SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of</i></p>



2 min

## Implications: How to be Trauma Informed



Implications: How to be Trauma Informed

Be aware of reasons victim reporting is often delayed:

- Fear, guilt, shame.
- Assumption of agency disbelief.
- Expectations that they will be placed in protective custody, segregation, or transferred.
- Fear of being labeled a "homo" or "punk" or "snitch."
- Fear of further victimization.
- Idea that inmates/residents cannot be "real" victims or that inmate/resident victims deserve their fate.

*Do NOT make assumptions around a report's validity exclusively based on how long ago the alleged incident occurred or the reasons an alleged victim gives for delaying the report.*

NATIONAL  
PREA  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. & Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.





*SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. & Dumond, D.A. (2007a). Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research & Statistics.*

There are many reasons victims delay reporting. Many victims experience fear, guilt, and shame. In the community, cases of sexual abuse are often not reported for those reasons as well.


In corrections, there are even more barriers to reporting, including

- Fear that they will be disbelieved due to their status as inmates/residents.
- Fear that they will be put in segregated housing.
- Fear that their reputation among other inmates/residents may be damaged in a way that may actually impact their safety. Predators in facilities will often view admissions of victimization as signs of weakness, so reporting may put victims at further risk.
- Cultural barriers among staff who believe that all sex going on is consensual or that sexual abuse is part of the punishment if you break the law and get put in custody.


Consider these issues when investigating reports of sexual abuse that you receive after-the-fact. A delay in reporting should not, by itself, influence an investigator's perception of the validity of an allegation.


<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p>Demeanor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correction culture tends to encourage a "tradition of toughness" approach; recognize that certain culture and practices can be re-traumatizing ➡ Stay calm and emphasize a listening role when discussing sensitive issues with survivors</li> <li>• Sexual abuse victims suffer from disempowerment. ➡ Consider steps you can take re: your body language, tone of voice, uniform, etc. to create a more comfortable environment for the inmate.</li> </ul> <p style="font-size: small;">SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillece, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory Group Report, 1997</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>So, what can you do to avoid causing a "second injury?" Be aware of your demeanor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The "tough guy" approach is not the best way to get a victim of sexual abuse to cooperate with an interview.</li> <li>• Because an incident of sexual abuse is extremely disempowering, consider steps you can take to minimize the inmate/resident's feelings of disempowerment during the interview.</li> <li>• Emphasize collaboration rather than compliance.</li> </ul> <p>Pay attention to your body language. You can physically trigger flashbacks in someone who has experienced trauma by standing over him or her, standing too close to him or her, brushing up against him or her, staring or speaking too close to his or her face, or touching him or her.</p>	 <p><i>SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillece, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory Group Report, 1997</i></p> <p><i>SOURCE: Trauma Addictions Mental Health and Recovery (TAMAR) Treatment Manual and Modules</i></p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p>	 <p><i>SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillece, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory</i></p>

	<div data-bbox="423 191 1040 659" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p>Language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize collaboration rather than compliance. Trying to pressure the alleged victim into talking will only delay the investigation.</li> <li>• Be aware of the implications of what you ask: <b>What happened to you? vs. What's wrong with you?</b></li> <li>• Don't condescend to the victim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Nobody can hurt you now."</li> <li>- "Trust me."</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p style="font-size: small;">SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillice, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory Group Report, 1997</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Be aware of your language choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize collaboration rather than compliance.</li> <li>• Do not try to pressure the victim into talking; this will only delay the investigation.</li> <li>• When you ask questions, be aware of the implications. For example, when you ask, "Why is this upsetting? Have you had sex before?" this implies that the sexual abuse was in some way the victim's fault. Try to avoid any questions or statements that will increase the victim's self-blame, guilt, or shame.</li> <li>• Avoid being condescending or making promises you cannot keep.</li> </ul> <p>Many of the victims will be unlikely to trust you. This may be because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are a new person to them</li> <li>• You are part of the correctional agency</li> <li>• You are part of a law enforcement agency that was not able to assist them during earlier victimizations</li> <li>• You are part of a law enforcement agency that played a role in their incarceration</li> </ul> <p>Be honest and straight-forward with the victim. The faster you can gain their trust, the faster you will get the full story.</p>	<p><i>Group Report, 1997</i></p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p>	<div data-bbox="1192 1707 1300 1787" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond,</p>

	<div data-bbox="435 191 1029 642" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p>Location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incarcerated victims of sexual abuse can face potentially dangerous consequences if their victimization becomes general knowledge – labeling the victim can be catastrophic.</li> <li>• Providing privacy to alleged victims during the interview process will create a more comfortable environment in which the inmate/resident may be more likely to share important information with the investigator</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Consider how your choice of interview locations may impact the quality of your interview.</b></p> <p style="font-size: small;">SOURCE: Dumond, R.W. &amp; Dumond, D.A. (2007a). <i>Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety</i>. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Consider how your choice of interview locations may impact the quality of your interview.</p> <p>Interview the victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a private location</li> <li>• Away from their housing unit</li> <li>• If the allegation is of staff sexual misconduct, during a shift when the suspected staff member is not working</li> </ul> <p>If you are not arranging the location of the interview, be sure to ask that the location be as neutral as possible. Do not, for example, interview the inmate/resident in the location of the alleged incident or in the presence of other staff or inmates/residents.</p> <p>Keep the purpose of the interview confidential to provide maximum confidentiality to the victim.</p>	<p>D.A. (2007a). <i>Managing prison sexual violence: A guide to effective victim services. Building Blocks for Institutional Safety</i>. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research &amp; Statistics.</p>
<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<div data-bbox="418 1415 1042 1890" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>Understand unexpected/irrational behavior as adaptive rather than seeing it as intentionally provocative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rage</li> <li>– Repetition-compulsion</li> <li>– Self-injury</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Remind yourself that these behaviors result from trauma; Traumatized adults respond to their trauma history in the present.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Don't take things personally.</b></p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillece, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory Group Report, 1997</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="1192 1373 1300 1444" style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p>SOURCE: "Creating Trauma Informed Systems of Care for Human Service Settings: What is Trauma and Why Must We Address It?" by Joan Gillece, PhD "In Their Own Words," Maine Trauma Advisory Group Report, 1997</p>

	<p>If an inmate/resident is hostile or uncooperative during an interview, do not take it personally. Remember</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survivors are living out their trauma in the present.</li> <li>• Getting frustrated or angry will only exacerbate the situation.</li> <li>• To seek help from a mental health practitioner or victim advocate if you need advice.</li> </ul>	
--	---	--

<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <p>An investigator could trigger an inmate/resident simply by looking like a past attacker. Visual triggers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Height</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Hair color</li> <li>• Mannerisms</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">How should this knowledge impact investigations?</p> <p style="font-size: small;">SOURCE: Trauma Addictions Mental Health and Recovery (TAMAR) Treatment Manual and Modules</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>Finally, your sex, height, race, hair, or mannerisms could trigger an inmate/resident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you can adjust something to make the victim feel more comfortable, do so.</li> <li>• If you can't, consider asking someone else to conduct the interview.</li> </ul>	 <p><i>SOURCE: Trauma Addictions Mental Health and Recovery (TAMAR) Treatment Manual and Modules</i></p>
---------------------	--	---

<p><b>1 min</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Implications: How to be Trauma Informed</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize the existence and impact of trauma.</li> <li>2. Do no harm in your interactions with victims.</li> <li>3. Work intentionally to incorporate your knowledge of the existence and impact of trauma into your investigation techniques.</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: x-small;">NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER</p> </div> <p>To summarize, trauma-informed practices require the</p>	
---------------------	--	---

	investigator to recognize that trauma exists and can have a significant impact on the victim. In order to do no harm and to increase the likelihood of a successful investigation, investigators need to work intentionally to incorporate their knowledge around trauma into their investigation techniques.	
<b>1 min</b>	<b>Questions?</b>	



## **Module 4: Trauma and Victim Response Handout 1**

A female offender accuses a male officer of sexually harassing. Upon interviewing her, it is clear that she was shaken by the incident and feels truly violated. However, observers – staff and fellow inmates – of the incident agree that he did not do anything inappropriate during their interaction.

What happened?

## Module 4: Trauma and Victim Response Handout 2

### GOOD THINGS TO SAY TO VICTIMS\*

- How can I help you?
- What can I do for you?
- I'm sorry.
- What happened is not your fault.
- I believe you.
- Your case is important/unique.
- Do you feel safe?
- Do you have any concerns about your safety?
- Who else have you spoken to?
- Would you like a referral for further victim assistance?
- Can I make any calls for you?
- Do you need anything else?
- If you need something, contact me at....
- I'm sorry to bother you.
- I know this is one more interruption in your life.
- I can't imagine, but...
- I can't possibly understand what you are going through, but I'm going to try and help you.
- I don't know, but I'll find out.
- How are you doing?
- Let's see if we can figure out your most important needs right now.
- I'm glad you told us/me.

---

\* Seymour, A. (2002, July). *Communicating with Crime Victims*. Washington, DC: Justice Solutions

## BAD THINGS TO SAY TO VICTIMS\*

- I know how you feel.
- I understand what you're going through.
- Why???
- Why were you....didn't you...?
- Your case reminds me of another victim I dealt with...
- It's God's will (or any religious platitude).
- Move on, put it behind you.
- I can promise you that will happen for sure.
- If I were in your shoes....
- You're so strong...
- At least you weren't hurt.
- You should forgive.
- Time heals all wounds.
- Why didn't you.....?
- It could be worse.
- What you need is.....
- You're not the only victim I'm trying to help.
- Nothing at all.
- Avoid using generalizations.
- Avoid comparisons with other victims or cases.

---

\* Seymour, A. (2002, July). *Communicating with Crime Victims*. Washington, DC: Justice Solutions.

## **Tips for De-Escalating and Diffusing Anger\***

**Consider people in context:** People are complex and reveal different parts of their lives depending on the context in which they are functioning. As such, community supervision officers should not assume that their interaction with a victim is representative of the entire person. Generally, when community supervision officers see or talk with victims, victims are not functioning at their best. Looking at the individual victim through only one context reveals only one aspect of the individual.

**Practice Active Listening Skills. Don't interrupt:** Focus on what you are hearing the victim say and work toward understanding what they mean. Avoid thinking about what you are going to say next while the person is still speaking.

**Realize that people use behaviors to reach objectives:** Regardless of the victim's behavior, focusing on and reacting to that behavior isn't useful. People use behavior to attain their objectives (e.g., anger to intimidate, humor to disarm, tears to gain comfort, malice for revenge). Avoid righteous indignation about the victim's behavior and try to discern what the behavior is being used to achieve.

**Focus the interaction on the current dispute:** If the victim begins complaining about previous negative experiences with you, the probation/parole office, or justice system, allow some venting, but try to keep the focus of the discussion on the current situation and the current needs of the victim.

**Don't leap immediately to solutions – empathize with emotions that have surfaced:** Even if you see immediate possible solutions, take time to empathize with the emotions the victim is expressing. Acknowledge and honor their feelings by saying something like, "Sounds as if you are really concerned about..." If the victim confirms your assessment, you've succeeded. If he/she needs to continue venting, let it happen.

**Acknowledge an element of truth in the victim's allegations:** Try to self-assess in a way that is consistent with how the victim sees you and the situation. Examples could include: "I can see why you think I am not following through on this case"; "It's clear to me now that you think I've been ignoring your needs while focusing on the offender's issues"; "I can respect your frustration at not receiving your payments on time."

**Provide some procedural background:** Acknowledge the problem. Ask if you can explain the background or agency policies and procedures. Acknowledge that it may not change the problem, but now there is understanding.

**Stay calm.** Don't become flustered by a victim's anxiety or urgency. This can be difficult, especially if you've had a hard day or if the victim's anger is being directed at you. However, if you are calm, it may help diffuse some of the victim's frustration. Also, by staying calm, you will be better able to keep the discussion focused on the underlying issue.

**Use “I” statements.** Using “I” statements can be hard when you are caught up in the anger of a given moment and if your intent in the argument is to focus on being right instead of reaching resolution. Using “I” statements often takes conscious effort. For example, say “I’m not sure I understand what you are saying” rather than “You are not making any sense.”

**Have self-awareness.** Be aware of what assumptions, interpretations and experiences you bring to the conversation.

**Work collaboratively to reach a solution:** When appropriate, suggest possible solutions. Preface your suggestions with phrases such as “What would you think about...”; “I wonder if might help to...” Recognize that you will not always be able to solve the problem and that you may not reach a mutually agreed upon solution; however, consider the conversation successful if the victim responds to you from a solution orientation.

**Know when to seek additional assistance:** Recognize your limitations to solve or respond to all of a victim’s issues or needs. You are not expected to be a psychotherapist or know all the “right” answers. When you’ve done all you can, seek assistance from a supervisor. Also, be aware of resources you can refer victims to for more information or assistance.

---

\* Information adapted from the following sources:

Seymour, A. (1998). *Do’s and Don’ts in Supporting Victims of Crime*. Unpublished.

Murray, M., Hook, M., and Seymour A. (2005, August). *Listen to My Story: Communicating with Victims of Crime Video Discussion Guide*. Washington, DC: Office for Victims of Crime.

Morgan, R. (n.d.). *Working for Summer Conference Programs: Tips for R.A.s*. Retrieved June 26, 2007 from [http://www.reslife.net/html/life-after-ra\\_0301c.html](http://www.reslife.net/html/life-after-ra_0301c.html).

Dalton, F. (2005, December). *5 Tips for Diffusing Hostilities*. Retrieved June 25, 2007 from <http://www.asaecenter.org/PublicationsResources/whitepaperdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=24452>.

Manzanares, M. J. (2006, August). *Diffusing Anger*. Retrieved June 25, 2007 from <http://www.leadershipturn.com/diffusing-anger>.