Responding to Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody: Addressing the Needs of Boys, Girls, and Gender Nonconforming Youth
Notification of Curriculum Use
April 2014

The enclosed Responding to Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody: Addressing the Needs of Boys, Girls, and Gender Nonconforming Youth curriculum was developed by the Project on Addressing Prison Rape at American University, Washington College of Law 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 Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards served as the basis for the curriculum’s content and development with the goal of the Responding to Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody: Addressing the Needs of Boys, Girls, and Gender Nonconforming Youth curriculum being to satisfy specific PREA standard requirements.

It is recommended that the Responding to Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody: Addressing the Needs of Boys, Girls, and Gender Nonconforming Youth curriculum be reviewed in its entirety before choosing which modules to use. Any alterations to the original materials require either acknowledgement during their presentation or removal of the PRC and Project on Addressing Prison Rape 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: Use of the enclosed curriculum, either in part or whole, does not guarantee that an auditor will find a facility “meets standards.” Rather, an auditor will take into consideration the curriculum used as part of their overall determination of compliance.

Notice of Federal Funding and Federal Disclaimer – This project was supported by Grant No. 2010-RP-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice nor those of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), which administers the National PREA Resource Center through a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Justice Assistance.
Training Curriculum:
Responding to Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody:
Addressing the Needs of Boys, Girls and Gender Non-Conforming Youth

Module 7:
Gender, Victimization and Vulnerable Youth

The Project on Addressing Prison Rape
February 2014

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Objectives

• Identify gender-influenced socialization, communication styles and behaviors of boys, girls and gender non-conforming youth

• Discuss past abuse histories and implications for institutional victimization

• Discuss vulnerable victims and implications

• Identify staff characteristics and behavior that contribute to victimization
Gender-influenced Socialization, Communication Styles, and Behaviors
Boys

Guard inner feelings

Emphasis on suppression of emotions considered weak

Identity based on defining self with focus on independence, self-sufficiency, autonomy

Reluctant to ask for help

Non-verbal

Focus on strategy

More able to express anger; less able to express fear, anxiety, sadness
Girls

Emotionally expressive, even if emotions are displaced or reactive

Identity based on defining self in relation to others; survival in inter-dependence

Emphasis on connection

More likely to ask for help

Often verbal; attempt resolution thru speech

More able to express feelings, weaknesses, vulnerability, confusion
Past Victimization Histories:

Implications for Institutional Victimization
Abuse Histories: Boys

History of abuse by parents or guardians

Involvement in subsequent childhood or adolescent aggression and delinquency

Connection between sexual/physical victimization and aggressive and self-destructive behavior

Report past abuse associated with violent crime

May not recognize sexual abuse by female as ‘abusive’
Abuse Histories: Boys

Defend against feelings associated with victimization (shame, stigma)

Victimization experience falls outside gender role of being strong and in control

May have fears about sexual identity and preference

Feel the best defense, is a good offense

May imitate their aggressors
Implications: Boys

Feel shame and denial

Felt (or were) unheard and unrecognized as abuse victims

Guard feelings to mask vulnerability

Are acutely aware of ‘code’ and their ranking inside

Fear that if they come forward they will be seen as homosexual (if male perpetrator)

Struggle with ideas of masculinity
Abuse Histories: Girls

History of abuse by parents/guardians; other family; friends of family

Involvement in subsequent childhood or adolescent delinquency and substance abuse

Often have prior history of abuse in custodial or inpatient settings

Abuse begins in childhood; continues into adulthood with intimate partners and strangers
Abuse Histories: Girls

Sexual molestation increases risk for delinquency, addiction, and early offending

Report violent crime associated with abusive associates, male partners

May imitate their aggressors

At risk for unhealthy relationships with authority figures, based on perceptions of their power to harm or to help
Implications: Girls

Difficulty adjusting to coercive, invasive, restrictive environments

Lack of right to privacy, room searches, bodily searches may replicate past abuse

Constant triggers

Vulnerable to abusive authority figures

Concern with how reporting may interrupt relationships (including calls and visits)
Implications: Girls

Faced with sexual assault situations
• May not understand it is possible to refuse
• May lack perception of a ‘right’ to refuse
• May believe it is always dangerous to refuse

Realistic appraisal of
• Retaliation by perpetrator or their friends for non-compliance (especially with staff)
• Lack of safe, non-stigmatizing response options
Previously Victimized Individuals

Often have:

- A history of early victimization - family, neighborhood, school
- Exposure to aggression, dominance, and control
- Distorted view of self and relationships
- Merged concepts of love and aggression
Previously Victimized Individuals

- Deep mistrust and sense of danger
- Emotional (and for women, physical) pain
- Post-trauma effects -- depression, anxiety, anger, substance abuse/addiction
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Past histories of institutional abuse
- Ingrained emphasis on keeping secrets
Mapping: The Neurobiology of Trauma

- Bodily/body cavity searches
- Observed, enforced nudity
- Must obey orders; right to escalate penalties
- Personal effects, living space searches
- 24-hour vulnerability & lack of privacy
- Restraint, seclusion, confinement
- Control of contact with family
- Use of force, command voice, threats
Potential Victim Responses to Sexual Victimization

Comply, repeat victimization

Pretend it never happened

Seek other affiliations for protection
  • other staff; gangs; protective pairing

Withdraw from activities, associations

Take control by deciding sexual activity is/was wanted
  • Can’t be forced if...
Potential Victim Responses to Sexual Victimization

- Commit violation to pull move to segregated housing
- Refuse to report to avoid segregated housing
- Seek help [where?]
- Take anger out on others
- Self harm, suicide ideation/attempts
Contributors to Repeat Victimization

Repeated sex with perpetrator(s) facilitated by:

• Danger of retaliation for refusal, reporting

• Responses to sexual assault/rape = numbing, PTSD, fatalism, depression

• Perception of no safe remedies within the facility

• Fear of being put in protective housing, of getting victim status inside, so don’t report

• Facility non-identification or non-response
Implications

• Psychological effects
• HIV/STD infections
• Physical injury
• Pregnancy
• Control issues– victims and general population
• Suicide or attempts
• Self-harm
• Staff responsibilities
• Ethical issues
• Reporting- medical and mental health care professionals
Preparation Before You Need It!

Identify who the vulnerable victims are

Discuss how vulnerable victims can impact the investigative process

Identify tools which will allow you to best support these victims during the investigative process

Identify resources that will be helpful to you in managing vulnerable victims; build links to these resources
Especially Vulnerable Youth

- Previously victimized
- Limited language ability
- Developmentally disabled
- Mentally ill
- Hearing Impaired
- Untreated Addicts
- Gender non-conforming
- Very young youth
Developmentally Disabled

Want to please people in authority

Rely on authority figures for solution

Watch for clues from interviewer; wants to be friends; wants to please

Real memory gaps

Short attention span
Quick to take blame

Allow person to use their own words

Do not ask leading questions

Use concrete ideas (who, what, when, where, how)

Be respectful, let them take their time
Deaf/Hearing Impaired

Use certified sign language interpreter(s) (ADA) appropriate to setting

Consider videotaping (if not re-traumatizing)

Do not use staff if not certified

Ask the interpreter if they are comfortable with the subject matter. If not, make other arrangements
Youth with Mental Illness

Construct an environment where the victim is most likely to feel safe

Remember that those charged with keeping the victim safe were unable to

Have pre-interview safety planning

Be prepared to let the victim walk/pace during the interview if safe

Keep the interview short

Time the interview in terms of the victim’s medications and sleep patterns
Recent/Untreated Drug Users

Estimate time since last ingestion of substance(s)

Know medical history and current medications

Expect heightened sense of generalized fear, of defensiveness

Expect lack of trust
Recent/Untreated Drug Users

- Expect history of severe prior victimization
- Be prepared for attention span/organization problems
- Understand that emotional reaction may not be what you expect for the story (lack of match)
- Utilize your resources for addiction prevention and recovery programs (certified)
Only ask questions that are absolutely necessary regarding gender

Use identifiers the interviewee prefers

• Remember, gender identity is a person's sense of their own gender, communicated to other's by their gender expression
Gender Non-Conforming Youth

Use gender neutral language (e.g., “partner” instead of girlfriend or boyfriend)

Utilize support groups, advocates, mental health services, as resources

Have an accurate and current base of information for making effective referrals and obtaining critical knowledge
Very Young Youth

Be aware of their perception of the interviewer – an adult, in authority

Know that peer relationships are their 1st priority

Remember that notions of sexuality depend on age and socialization; youth views of sex and use of terms may be different from an adult’s
Very Young Youth

Watch for non-verbal communication.
  • Know that inability to communicate does not equal untruth

Be aware of prior victimization histories

Utilize advocates, outside resources, therapists, etc.
Staff Characteristics that May Contribute to Victimization
Staff Characteristics

Stress from daily heavy emotional demands on staff

Burnout due to
- low morale, lack of respect, low pay, managing difficult and demanding youth, understaffing, overtime, shift work, overcrowding, disillusionment

Highly unfulfilling private life; substance abuse

Lack of normal support networks
Staff Characteristics

Role ambiguities:
  • counseling and treatment responsibilities vs. surveillance and control

Inadequate preparation for supervising youth and understanding their complexity

Prior abuse histories
Staff Characteristics

Inadequate supervision

Familiarity/over-identification with youth

Problems in personal life contributing to onset
Summary

- Gender plays important part in risk and response to victimization in institutional settings
- Past victimization and special issues can affect abuse and investigations into abuse
- Agency policies, procedures and practices can increase or decrease impact of victimization