

“Sexual Assault: Victim’s Rights and Services” DVD: Strategies for Working with Law Enforcement for Rape Crisis Centers

Summary

Florida Council Against Sexual Violence has produced a 12 minute training video that informs law enforcement officers of the rights and services available to victims of sexual assault. It provides officers with information on forensic medical exams, victim compensation, sexual violence injunctions and the services offered by advocates in certified rape crisis centers (RCC’s).

The training video includes a model interview between a responding officer and a victim of sexual assault. The officer demonstrates that responding to victims with compassion and sensitivity and taking the time to inform them of their rights and resources are the best practices for effective investigations and protecting victims.

The release of this video creates opportunities for rape crisis centers to meet with local law enforcement agencies and familiarize officers with the services they provide. It can be used as a tool on multiple levels – as a stand alone video that officers can view on their own or during roll call – and as a tool that rape crisis centers can use to help build bridges and communicate with law enforcement about best practices for interacting with victims of sexual violence. The video has been distributed in hard copy form to every law enforcement agency in the state as well as to every certified rape crisis center. It is also available online at www.fcasv.org. We have put together the strategies below to help rape crisis center staff members use the DVD as a tool in working with law enforcement agencies.

The goal of the project is to instruct officers on implementation of SB 1312, passed in 2009, that requires law enforcement officers to provide sexual assault victims information on legal rights, crisis and advocacy services, referrals to local certified rape crisis centers and informational brochures.

We encourage rape crisis centers staff members to partner with law enforcement agencies when this video is shown and to provide supporting materials (brochures, business cards, etc.) that detail the resources and services centers provide.

The Basics

When preparing to partner with law enforcement officers to show the DVD keep the following things in mind:

- The screening **will be most effective if it is led or co-led by a law enforcement officer from that agency**. Ask a Sergeant or higher ranking officer you have a good relationship with if you could be a part of the training when they screen the DVD. Law enforcement officers will take the training much more seriously if they see a fellow officer in the lead training role.
- The DVD is about 12 minutes long. If the screening is taking place during role call, keep it short. Try to keep the whole training to less than 20 minutes.
- The audience may or may not know what an advocate from a rape crisis program does. Tell them specifically about the resources and services you provide. Have handouts available as well as business cards and information on the best way to contact your center.
- They may have an advocate that already works for the law enforcement agency. Give examples of how you might work together with their advocate and why services from a rape crisis center are important.
- Have extra copies of the Victim’s Rights and Services brochure available.

- Bring as many advocates from your center with you as you can. Have them introduce themselves and give out business cards as well.
- If you have a community protocol about how to respond to sexual violence victims, remind them about it and bring copies. Tell them who they can contact to find out more about the protocol.
- Emphasize to the officers how important their role is in helping victims recover, and ask your law enforcement co-trainer to lead a short discussion on how the video emphasizes best practices.

Arranging for a Viewing of the DVD

FCASV has sent copies of the DVD to every law enforcement agency in Florida. This was done with the hope that each agency would show the video at roll call at least once. It is a good idea, however, to contact your local law enforcement agencies and ask if they have a copy of the DVD and whether or not they have shown it. If they have not yet screened it, ask if they will show it and invite you to speak to the officers. Each law enforcement agency has at least one person designated to handle training though you may choose to work with one of your more familiar contacts to arrange for the viewing. You may also have to visit individual agencies on multiple occasions to be sure that every officer gets to see your presentation.

Tips for arranging for a viewing of the DVD include:

- Ask your local law enforcement agencies if they have screened the video and if they have not yet done so, offer to speak at the screening when they do show it.
- Help encourage buy-in of the officers by asking the law enforcement trainer to introduce the video and RCC staff as well as to lead off a brief discussion after the video.
- Speak with the law enforcement trainer in advance and ask about how they would like you to co-present with them.
- Be flexible in timing. Roll call shift change can take place at odd times. Offer to attend multiple roll calls.
- Offer to bring a snack to share with officers.
- Be accommodating and keep your presentation short. This is a good opportunity to become more familiar with your local law enforcement agencies and for them to connect your name and agency with the needs of survivors. If it works, you might be invited back to do more extensive training later.

Sample DVD Screening Agenda

Time	Leader	Activity
2 Min	LE Trainer	Introduction of video and RCC staff
12 Min	LE Trainer	Show video
2 Min	LE Trainer/RCC Staff	Short discussion on best practices (LE trainer leads off, RCC staff adds comments)
3 Min	RCC Staff	Highlight services, where/how to contact RCC, hand out information.