Providing Services to Survivors of Sexual Abuse in Jails

2014 FCASV Sexual Violence Training Summit

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Miami Dade Inmate Safety Project: OVC #2012-VF-GX-K018
Just Detention International

JDI is a nonprofit health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual violence in all forms of detention.

Core goals:
1. To hold government officials accountable
2. To change public attitudes about sexual violence behind bars
3. To ensure survivors get the help they need
Impact of Sexual Abuse in Jail

“I used to feel shame and humiliation about what happened to me in that Texas jail. Eventually, I came to realize that it was not my shame — it was my country’s shame.”

— Tom Cahill, prisoner rape survivor and former JDI President
Support from the Office for Victims of Crime

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- The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this webinar are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.
Agenda

• Welcome and Introductions
• Voices for Justice Video
• MDCR Inmate Safety Program
• Prevalence, Dynamics, Reporting, and Impact of Sexual Abuse in Jails
• Providing In-Person Services for Survivors in Jail
• Q & A
How many of you have worked with a survivor of sexual abuse in jail?

IF THIS WOMAN
WERE BEING RAPED,
WOULD YOU HELP HER?

HOW ABOUT NOW?
Survivor Stories: Voices for Justice

Voices for Justice - 6m34s.mp4
Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation (MDCR) Inmate Safety Project

• Partnership between MDCR, Roxcy Bolton Rape Treatment Center (RTC), and JDI

• Funded by Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)

• Three-year project funded through September 30, 2014

• Counseling services supported beyond

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Inmate Safety Project Goals

• Launch a confidential inmate rape crisis counseling program at all MDCR facilities
• Develop a comprehensive sexual assault inmate education program at all MDCR facilities
• Implement facility-level Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) at each MDCR facility
• Provide comprehensive staff training for all MDCR custody and health services personnel
Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Jails
Demographics of Jail Inmates

- Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a MILLION people are in jail
- Nearly 13 million people are admitted to jails every year
Demographics of Jail Inmates

The average jail inmate is:

- Adult man
- Person of color
- Not charged with a crime
- Incarcerated in large facilities with 1,000 or more inmates
Prevalence of Staff Sexual Abuse

Most **survivors** of staff sexual misconduct are **men**. Most **perpetrators** are **women**.

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Jail Perpetrators Tend to Target:

- Female inmates
- Biracial or multi-racial inmates
- Younger inmates
- College-educated inmates
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) inmates
- Inmates who experienced prior sexual abuse
Dynamics of Sexual Abuse in Jails
Sexual violence in jail may include the following dynamics:

- Sexual harassment
- Protective pairing
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual abuse
- Abuse during searches
- Ritual/gang abuse
- Domestic violence/battering
- Rape
Consent in a Custody Setting

VIOLENCE & THREATS

PERSUASION

CONSENT

COERCION

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Barriers to Reporting

- Felt embarrassed or ashamed: 69%
- Afraid of perpetrator: 52%
- Afraid of being punished by staff: 41%
- Didn’t want anyone to know: 70%
- Thought staff would not investigate: 43%
Common Effects of Sexual Abuse in Jails

- Rape Trauma Syndrome and PTSD
- Sexually transmitted diseases and HIV
- Increased suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Worsening of psychiatric disorders

Michelle, a survivor of sexual abuse in jail
Impact of Detention

- Jails tend to be very chaotic, stressful environments.
- Survivors in jail often have little control over their bodies or their surroundings.
- Survivors may be punished or placed in isolated housing after reporting.
Safety Concerns

• Survivors may experience retaliation by inmates or staff.
• Incarceration almost always involves ongoing contact with the perpetrator(s).
• Anyone who has been targeted for sexual assault in jail may be seen as an “easy target” by others for revictimization.
Inmate Counseling Program

• Therapists provide regular, in-person one-on-one confidential counseling services for adult inmates.

• Inmates who have experienced sexual abuse at any point in their lives are eligible.

• Inmates can request counseling multiple ways.

• Therapists maintain all files/documentation off-site.

• Group sessions are now beginning.
Counseling Services

• Develop protocol with custody and health services staff to cover all aspects from arrival to providing ongoing services

• Inmate clients identified through health clinic, sick call form submissions by inmate, corrections counselor (advocate) referrals, word-of-mouth
Clinical Considerations

• Avoid discussing a survivor’s criminal background unless directly relevant to the services.
• Adapt interventions to the jail environment.
• Always maintain confidentiality.
• Decide in advance how to handle challenging requests for services.
Client Dynamics

- Facility work environments
- Examples of cases from MDCR
Overcoming Fears About Inmates

- Focus on the victimization, not the incarceration.
- Get to know the jail facility, staff and inmates.
- Remember that inmates are members of your community.
- Affirm your commitment to serve all survivors, regardless of their background.
Best Practices for Working with Corrections Staff

- Seek common ground.
- Respect each other’s roles.
- Share resources and information trauma.
- Communicate effectively about sensitive issues.
Discussion and Wrap-up

• Questions?
The Prison Rape Elimination Act

At the PREA signing ceremony with (from left) President George Bush, the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, and Tom Cahill, prisoner rape survivor and former JDI President.

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Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

• Passed in 2003
• First federal law to address sexual abuse in detention
• Requires funding for corrections agencies, yearly research on prevalence, and the creation of national standards
PREA Standards

• Released by the Department of Justice on May 17, 2012
• Apply to all corrections facilities
• Comprehensive set of guidelines related to all aspects of custodial sexual abuse, including:
  ✷ Prevention
  ✷ Detection
  ✷ Response
  ✷ Monitoring
Standards and Service Providers

Jails must:

• Offer survivors forensic exams and emergency and ongoing care
• Attempt to make available a victim advocate from a rape crisis center

Members of JDI’s Survivor Council at the Department of Justice
Standards and Service Providers

Jails are also required to:

- Allow survivors access to rape crisis advocates in as confidential a manner as possible
- Provide ongoing medical and mental health treatment consistent with the community standard of care
- Attempt to enter into working agreements with community service providers
Contact Information

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