



RESPOND, EDUCATE & ADVOCATE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

RESPONDING TO TRAUMA

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Objectives



- Understand dynamics of sexual violence
- Review trauma theory and common response to trauma
- Understand importance of language and providing a trauma-informed response
- Review the role of supportive services and victim rights/options in care

PAAR services



VICTIM RESPONSE TEAM

- **MEDICAL ADVOCACY**
- **LEGAL ADVOCACY AND ACCOMPANIMENT**
- **CRISIS COUNSELING IN VARIOUS SETTINGS**

THE DROP IN CENTER

PAAR addresses the unique and practical needs of those who experience sexual exploitation and trafficking with services to help victims gain their freedom and independence:

- **PERSONAL ADVOCACY**
- **INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT**
- **GROUP WORK**

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PAAR services



CLINICAL SERVICES

- **CHILD AND FAMILY CENTER**
- **ADULT INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP THERAPY**
- **WELLNESS SERIES**

PREVENTION

- **PRIMARY PREVENTION**
- **PROJECT LAST CALL**
- **CBIM**
- **PITK**

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Sexual Violence



Understanding the landscape

People with a disability are twice as likely to experience sexual violence.¹

60% of black girls will experience childhood sexual abuse.²

1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused by age 18.³

People are more likely to blame the victim if they are black or latinx.⁵

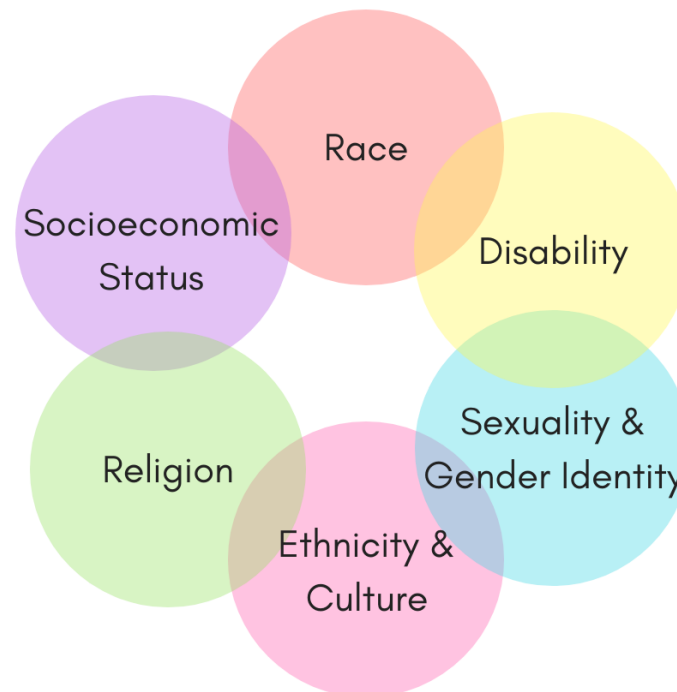
1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have experienced sexual violence.⁴

People who identify as transgender are 50% more likely to experience sexual violence.²

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.

(Oxford Dictionary)



**THROUGHOUT THE RESEARCH, ONE THEME HAS
REMAINED CONSISTENT:**

**Sexual abuse is extensively
undisclosed and under-reported**

Research shows



**“Sexual violence is one of the most
UNDER-REPORTED CRIMES with 68% of
assaults left unreported.”**

U.S. Department of Justice, the Office of
Victims of Crime

Shame and Secrecy



“The intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we’ve experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection.” (Dr. Brene Brown)

- **Shame and secrecy** are central to sexual trauma
- Victims might feel responsible for the abuse, and feel shame as a result:
“I was assaulted because I am (...)”



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TRAUMA AND RESPONSE

The brain & trauma

TRAUMA OVERWHELMS OUR ABILITY TO

- Have a sense of control
- Make meaning of our experience
- Maintain connection to others



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT OUR BRAIN FUNCTIONS DIFFERENTLY WHEN WE EXPERIENCE TRAUMA.

Common reactions

Healing from sexual violence does not follow a time schedule or pattern. Individual responses to trauma could include:

- Withdrawn
- Laughing
- Hysterical
- Flat affect
- Sad
- Anxious
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Fearful
- Numb
- Quiet
- Indifferent

The brain

thalamus

- Accepts information from our 5 senses
- Regulates sex hormones; blood pressure; body temp

amygdala

- Determines danger



hippocampus

- Gives a date and time stamp

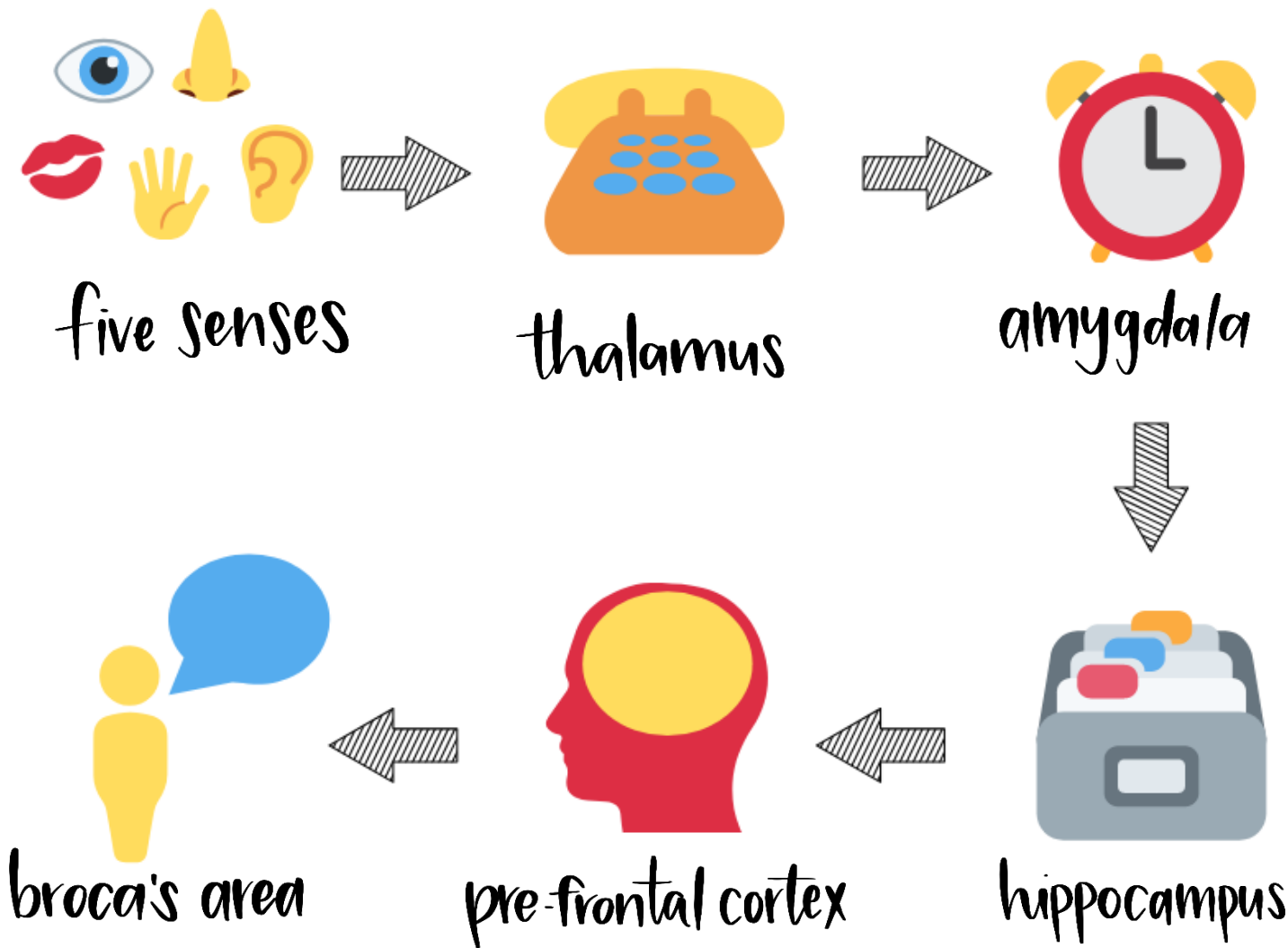
pre-frontal cortex

- Higher level of thinking, decision making

broca's area

- Attaches speech to our experiences

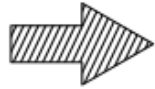
Average Memory



Traumatic Memory



five senses



thalamus



amygdala



hippocampus



pre-frontal cortex



Broca's area

The brain & trauma

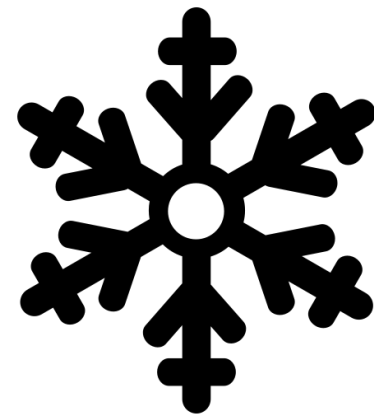
AUTOMATIC RESPONSE SYSTEM –



FIGHT



FLIGHT



FREEZE

Trauma symptoms



WHAT DOES TRAUMA LOOK LIKE?

- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Emotional numbing
- Anger and aggression
- Self-harming behaviors
- Dissociation (*spacing/blanking out; losing time*)
- Memory gaps (*difficulty retrieving & communicating memories*)

Common Experiences



- Difficulty sleeping/ nightmares/ flashbacks
- Hypervigilance, constantly “on guard”
- PTSD
- Cumulative trauma, repeated sexual victimization**
- Use of poor coping mechanisms (drugs & alcohol, self-injury, eating disorders, etc)
- Avoidance or withdrawal
- Depression and anxiety
- Feelings of shame and guilt
- Chronic physical health problems (headaches, fatigue, stomach problems)
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Loss of self-esteem
- Suicidal thoughts or suicide

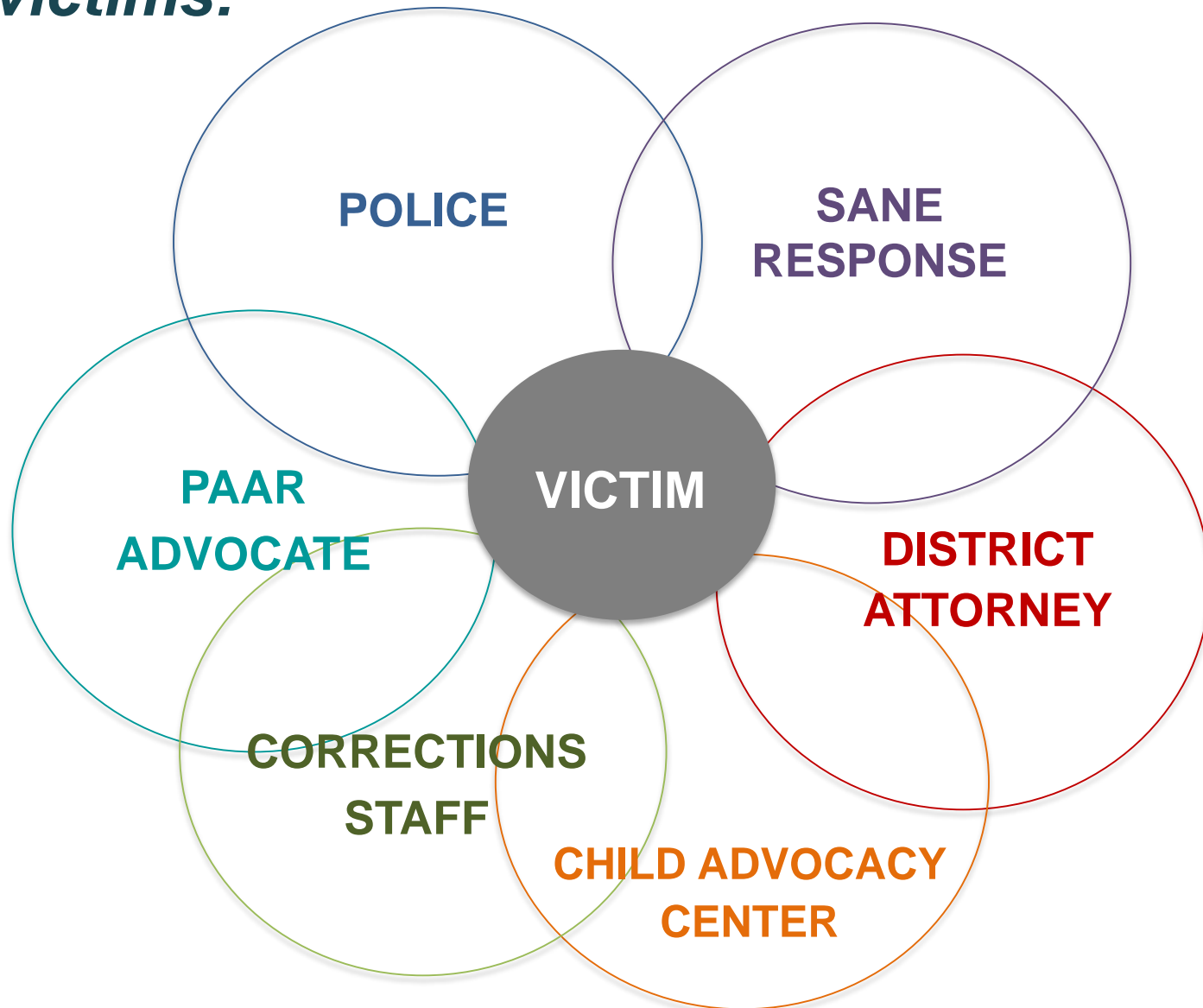
Research shows



“The **FIRST RESPONSE to victims is critical in determining how someone cope.”**

U.S. Department of Justice, the Office
of Victims of Crime

A Coordinated Response *to working with victims:*



Why a coordinated response?



COMMON GOALS

- Being responsive to the needs of victims
- Ensuring safety of victims
- Ensuring safety of the community
- Prosecuting offenders
- Victims choose to participate – because they are understood and supported

Medical Advocacy



MEET VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES AT LOCAL EMERGENCY ROOMS

- On-call advocates available 24 hours a day and respond in 60 minutes
- Hospital personnel contact advocates immediately after triage: **1-866-END-RAPE**
- Guide and support victims through the *Forensic Medical Exam* and initial police interview



Options in care



TO ENSURE HEALTH AND SELF-PROTECTION

- Check for possible injuries, even if none are visible
- Early detection and preventative treatment for HIV, STI's and pregnancy

TO COLLECT FORENSIC EVIDENCE

- Complete a *Forensic Medical Exam*, performed by a SANE or medical professional

IMPORTANCE OF DNA

- Key tool in investigation & prosecuting cases
- Evidence that the assault occurred, and perpetrator is the source of biological material

Police accompaniment



- Helpline available 24/7 to police departments requesting an advocate
- Explain reporting options
- Explain the court process and timeframe
- Court accompaniment in criminal and juvenile court
- Act as liaison between various systems (District Attorney's, police, probation)
- Assist in court preparation
- Registration and assistance:
 - SVPO's and PFI's
 - Victim's Compensation
 - Jail Notification
 - Victim's Bill of Rights

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Needs at disclosure



- To be believed
- To be recognized as a survivor of sexual assault
- To have others be honest with them
- Information and choice about what will happen next (transparency)
- Time and space to process feelings
- To feel safe



Needs at disclosure



THE VICTIM SHOULD –

- Be informed & involved
- Understand the next steps once a report has been filed
- Make active choices about how to proceed
- Be encouraged to access resources

- Provide choices – control
- Explain purpose & what will happen next
- Allow victim to refuse to make a statement
- Provide a private space
- Acknowledge the difficulty of talking about the assault
- Preface sensitive questions with why the question is being asked

What do I say?



I'm sorry you have to go through this. There is no "normal" so it is ok to feel (_____).

You aren't alone; there are services to help you through this.

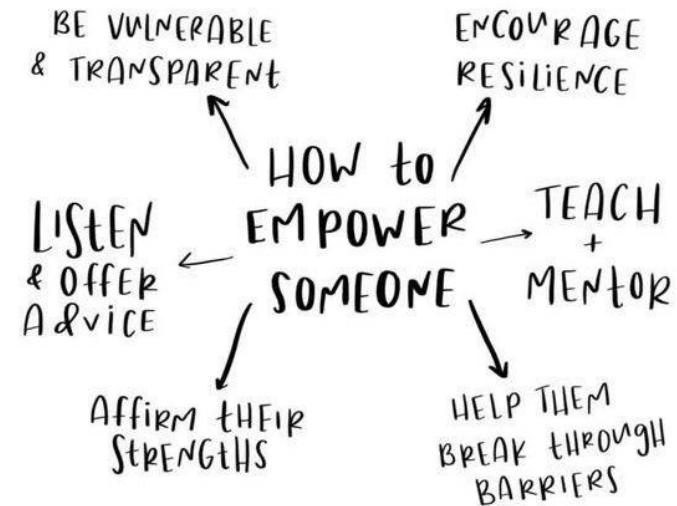
I want you to know that regardless of the circumstances, this shouldn't have happened.


You might feel unsafe or uncomfortable. It's important that the right people know about this so we can help keep you safe.

I'm sorry that happened to you. There are people who can help you through this.

Keeping perspective

- Feeling victimized is a terrible experience
- Many victims do not utilize the criminal justice system – it can feel re-victimizing
- Many barriers and stereotypes exist and everyone's experience is unique
- It is our role to refrain from making judgements





"We think we listen, but very rarely do we listen with real understanding, true empathy. Yet listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know."

– Carl Rogers

LANGUAGE MATTERS!

Terminology has a real
impact on people.



validation and hope

- This is hard. You've done hard things before and I believe in you.
- I know there's a lot that could go wrong. What could go right?
- All vibes are welcome here.
- It's pretty normal to have some negativity in this situation.
- It's probably pretty hard to be positive right now. I'm putting out good energy into the world for you.
- It's probably really hard to see any good in this situation. We'll make sense of it.

toxic positivity

- You'll get over it!
- Just be positive!
- Good vibes only!
- Stop being so negative!
- Think happy thoughts!
- Never give up!
- Just be happy!
- See the good in everything.





IS

HEALING

NOT

LINEAR



“When someone says **‘I’ve been raped’** the most important words in the world to say are **‘I believe you.’** If a survivor doesn’t hear that from anyone else, **she or he is going to hear it from me.**”

—Karen Carroll

The Voices and Faces Project
voicesandfaces.org



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