

Becoming Victim-Centered....



Developing a victim-centered response to sexual violence involves informing our protocols and policies with the best expertise in the field and knowing how and when to adapt our response to fit the unique needs and circumstances of a specific victim/survivor or case. By following these seven 'simple rules' each and every time we respond to sexual violence, responders can create a victim-centered response.

- **Consider the victim first.**

The victim/survivor and their unique needs and abilities should be considered first.

- **Listen generously.**

Listen with belief; acknowledge the violation. Listen with patience; walk with survivors as they determine their own path. Listen with compassion; give voice to the victim's experience. Listen with faith; believe in the victim/survivors' resilience. Listen to understand the victim/survivor's own goals for safety, healing, and seeking justice. Listen generously to victim/survivors, colleagues, team members, community members to affect the change we seek. Create safe places for people to tell their stories.

- **Promote victim self-agency.**

An agent is "one that acts or has the power or authority to act." Promote victim self-agency by offering the support and information that victims/survivors need to act in their own best interest relative to the unique circumstances of their lives. For a victim/survivor in crisis, work to re-engage or increase their own coping abilities to the point decision-making is again possible. Engage, consult, and inform a victim/survivor about decisions that will affect her or him. Informed decision-making means the victim/survivor knows what could be gained or lost in the options available to him or her.

- **Coordinate and collaborate in the victim's interest.**

Coordinating disparate and fractured elements of a response can improve a victim/survivors' experience and lead to better cases. Coordinating primarily in the system's own interests can re-victimize victims/survivors and jeopardize case outcomes.

- **Ensure victim-safety.**

Ensure victim/survivors have the information, resources, and supports to be or move toward safety. This can include access to confidential services, privacy protections, access to legal remedies for protection, notification of an offender's release, and consideration of the unintended consequences to victim/survivors of the policy and procedural decisions we make.

- **Seek just solutions for all.**

Be honorable, fair, lawful, suitable, and free from bias.

- **Hold self and others accountable.**

Be able to explain and answer for our own actions and decisions. Ask others to do the same.

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