

# VAWA STOP Funds Planning Bulletin: Sexual Assault Response Teams

February 2014



## SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAMS

Sexual Assault Response Teams work to improve a community's response to sexual violence by designing multidisciplinary, victim-centered interventions. The goal of these teams is an adaptive and self-correcting system which seeks good case outcomes through a collaborative victim-centered approach.<sup>i</sup> NIJ studies have found that Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) programs and multidisciplinary Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART):

- Enhance the quality of health care for women who have been sexually assaulted.
- Improve the quality of forensic evidence.
- Increase law enforcement's ability to collect information, file charges and refer to prosecution.
- Increase prosecution rates over time.<sup>ii</sup>

## VAWA STOP FUNDS 2013

VAWA 2013 requires states and territories to 'set aside' twenty percent for projects that *meaningfully* address sexual assault across at least two of the allocations (victim services, law enforcement, prosecution, courts) within two years. Funding SARTs (or similar community coordinated response teams) and/or an infrastructure to support them can be a way of meeting that set aside and addressing up to *eleven* STOP purpose areas including:

- Developing Sexual Assault Response Teams or other similar coordinated community responses to sexual assault (new as of VAWA 2013);
- Developing and promoting state, local, or tribal legislation and policies that enhance best practices for responding to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault (new as of VAWA 2013);
- Developing and strengthening policies, protocols, best practices, and training for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors relating to the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases and the appropriate treatment of victims (new as of VAWA 2013);
- Developing and implementing more effective police, court, and prosecution policies, protocols, orders and services to prevent, identify, and respond to violence against women – including sexual assault and domestic violence; and
- Training for law enforcement officers, judges, court personnel, and prosecutors about how to effectively identify and respond to violent crimes against women.

Some states and territories have been challenged to have sufficient eligible applicants within the law enforcement and prosecution categories in order to meet their allocations. SARTs (or similar community coordinated response teams) who focus on improving the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases can be funded from the allocation areas of 'programs that benefit law enforcement' and/or 'programs that benefit prosecution.'

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR STOP ADMINISTRATORS

In developing your *Implementation Planning Process and Plan*, consider:

- Providing training for your planning committee on sexual assault response teams;
- Including a local SART member on your Planning Committee;
- Determining needs for your state or territory, including:
  - asking communities about their need for a sexual assault response team,
  - including current sexual assault response team members in your needs assessment, and/or
  - facilitating focus groups on enhancing the response to sexual assaults in your state/territory; or
- Exploring the concept of funding sexual assault response teams in your priorities or in your plan for meeting the 20% sexual assault set aside.

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In developing your *Sub-Grantee Solicitation and Awards*, consider:

- Hosting trainings for your state on how to build the components of effective sexual assault response teams;
- Including potential projects for law enforcement and prosecution such as sexual assault training teams in your funding solicitation;
- Using sexual assault response teams as an example of projects for which law enforcement, prosecution, and victim services could apply in your sub-grantee applicant training; and/or
- Identifying projects that can provide training, technical assistance, and support to sexual assault response teams across your state or territory.

In developing your plans for *Ongoing Support to Sub-Grantees*, consider:

- Including information on sexual assault response teams in your newsletter or website;
- Hosting a training or workshop on sexual assault response teams in your state; and/or
- Providing information to your sub-grantees on trainings and technical assistance providers for sexual assault response teams.

## SVJI @ MNCASA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT FOR STOP ADMINISTRATORS

The Sexual Violence Justice Institute at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault has been working with multidisciplinary sexual assault response teams for over a decade. Our Technical Assistance Project for STOP Administrators can provide assistance in the following ways:

- Consultation on your state or territory's specific context and addressing questions such as:
  - *How do we know when a community is ready for a SART?*
  - *How do we solicit for proposals that enhance the response to sexual assault?*
  - *What is an effective funding award for SARTs?*
  - *How can we strengthen our current SARTs?*
  - *How can we promote further SART development?*
  - *How do we evaluate SART effectiveness?*
  - *What resources exist for local SART leaders or state SART TA and training coordinators?*
- Presentations to planning committees that address SART effectiveness within STOP purpose areas.
- Sample materials—RFPs, team standards, MOUs, reporting, technical assistance plans, etc.

**For more information:** Contact Laura Williams, SVJI Program Manager, at [laura@mncasa.org](mailto:laura@mncasa.org) or 800.964.8847. Learn more about our TA Project for STOP Administrators by going to our website at [www.svji.org/](http://www.svji.org/)

### Credits:

This VAWA STOP Funds Planning Bulletin: Sexual Assault Response Teams was developed with assistance from Laney Gibbes, Consultant, STOP Technical Assistance to Administrators Resource (STAAR) Project of the Alliance of Local Service Organizations (ALSO).

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.mncasa.org/Documents/svji/Key%20concepts.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/rape-sexual-violence/response.htm>