



Sexual Assault Response Team Starter Kit:

A Guide for New SART Teams

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Sexual Assault**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is supported by Grant Number 2015-TA-AX-K014 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the trainers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

This Starter Kit compiles the work of many individuals. We would like to acknowledge all those who played a role in the creation of this product.

Special thanks to the following current and former Sexual Violence Justice Institute staff, fellow, and interns:

Sophia Berg
Madison Cutler
Nikki Hanto
Johnanna Ganz
Shereen Reda
Noelle Volin
Ami Wazlawik

This document is a product of the Sexual Violence Justice Institute at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault. SVJI provides intensive support through trainings and technical assistance to multidisciplinary teams, communities, and state level leaders in Minnesota and other parts of the U.S.

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SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM STARTER KIT: A GUIDE FOR NEW SART TEAMS

INTRODUCTION

About the Sexual Violence Justice Institute at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault

This starter kit is a product of the Sexual Violence Justice Institute (SVJI) at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA). SVJI uses a systems change approach to support communities in improving systems' responses and the outcomes for victims/survivors of sexual violence. Systems change — in routine practices, protocols, and procedures— is a key element to improving the response to sexual violence. The SVJI team works with communities to create a comprehensive, victim-centered responses through multidisciplinary collaborations, leadership development, training, and technical assistance.

About Sexual Assault Response Teams

Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) play a powerful role in improving the collective response to sexual violence through increasing access to healing and justice. SART members typically include victim advocates, health care providers, law enforcement, prosecutors, and local human and social service organizations, as well as any other primary points of disclosure. Each of these members represent the diversity of experience and expertise specific to their community. SARTs that engage in systems change promote victim-centered responses to sexual violence through increased collaboration, education, and lasting improvements across disciplines.

Communities may have a number of reasons for forming a SART, including:

- Meeting an identified need within the community
- Fulfilling a funding requirement
- Fulfilling a legislative mandate
- Strengthening relationships between service providers
- Formalizing processes and relationships that already are in place

SARTs are one strategy that communities can use to respond to sexual violence. SVJI believes that, through the work of SARTs, meaningful change in the response to sexual violence is possible. SARTs, at all stages of development, focus their efforts to prioritize victim/survivors' needs, hold offenders accountable, and promote public safety.

How to use the SART Starter Kit

Forming a SART can seem like an overwhelming task, and the amount of information and resources available can be intimidating. SVJI has developed this starter kit to provide a clear, concise resource for new SARTs to begin their work. The kit provides an overview of the processes involved in forming a SART. It does not cover all of the issues and considerations related to SART work, but it does include links to additional resources that can provide further information on particular topics. This kit can be used as a general starting point for new SARTs focused on the preparation and formation of the team. While this tool provides an overview, you will need to decide how to best adapt the content to your community's unique resources, needs, and service area.

Who Should Use It

This tool is designed for communities that want to form or revitalize a multidisciplinary team. This team should be focused on increasing the efficacy of the local systems response to sexual violence and use a systems change process. In addition to guiding new team formation, established teams may find this kit a helpful tool for getting back to the basics.

What is Included

This Starter Kit provides foundational knowledge and tools that can be used by anyone. This information is divided into three primary sections:

1. Foundations
2. Readiness
3. Starting

Each section provides a brief overview of essential concepts, key questions to get the community thinking about implementation at the local level. Sections also contain a list of accompanying tools and resources in the Appendices to further advance the work of team formation and function.

Section Overview

- Types of SARTs
- Defining Systems Change
- Collaboration
- Key Questions
- Tools and Resources

Types of SARTs

A Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is a multidisciplinary collaboration that brings together the various professionals who address sexual assault with the goal of improving the local response to victims/survivors of sexual assault.¹ Some communities use different names and acronyms for these teams, such as Sexual Assault Interagency Council (SAIC) or Sexual Assault Protocol Team (SAPT), but the fundamental purpose is the same: to improve the coordination and enhance the response to sexual assault in a particular service area.

There are two primary types of multidisciplinary teams: *acute response* and *systems focused*. Acute response teams focus on individual cases and often function as active case management. Systems focused response teams concentrate on patterns across all individuals, agencies, and systems involved in the response. While acute response teams play an important role in many communities, this starter kit is designed with systems response teams in mind.

A systems-focused SART is a long-term, comprehensive way for a community to address all aspects of their response to sexual assault. In this type of SART, teams focus on the big picture – the entire network of response to sexual assault in their community. Big picture work involves reviewing existing protocols and procedures within and/or across disciplines to address gaps or barriers in service provision. The goal of these teams is to improve the overall response to sexual assault and improve the outcomes for all victims/survivors.

Defining Systems Change

A system is a group of things working towards a common goal. In our bodies, the respiratory system is a series of organs working together to help us breathe. Each part of the system has a unique and important part to play. The community response to sexual assault can be viewed as a system, made up of individual disciplines and service providers—each with a unique and important part to fill. For SARTs, the criminal legal system is where teams most often work within. By doing so, SARTs work to help victims find justice and better hold offenders accountable for their actions.

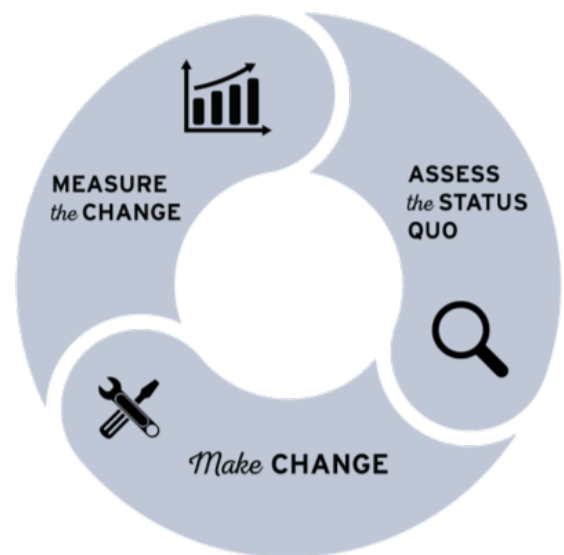
Systems change is working towards improving the individual systems response to sexual violence while also increasing collaboration between systems. Additionally, system change should impact individual practices, agency policies, systems procedures, and interagency collaboration

This means that systems-focused SARTs concentrate on:

- Enhancing the strengths of individual practices, agency policies, systems procedures, and interagency collaboration
- Addressing the shortcomings of individual practices, agency policies, systems procedures, and interagency collaboration
- Ensuring support and engagement for victims throughout all processes
- Continuously improving as time and communities change

Systems change is also a cyclical process, as communities will experience changes in resources, laws, new and promising practices, and the realities of sexual violence at the local level. Through vetting various models of continuous improvement with teams and agencies across the U.S., SVJI has developed a continuous improvement process for teams involving three phases:

- **Assess the Status Quo:** finding out what is currently happening, which can help identify needs and gaps
- **Make Change:** designing and implementing changes to the system that will help meet identified needs
- **Measure the Change:** evaluating these changes to ensure they are achieving the desired results



This continuous improvement approach allows teams to build on previous work as they further strengthen the systems response to sexual violence.

From the beginning, it is important to keep all stages in mind as you plan your SART work. Preparing for implementation and evaluation from the start will make the work easier and ensure that changes are long-lasting and effective. This preparation will also help your SART remain focused and stable through inevitable changes and turnover that come with teaming.

What makes SARTs Effective?

This toolkit is aimed to help teams be effective and impactful in their work from the very beginning. Using a nationally-focused, rigorous information collection process, SVJI found that effective systems-focused SARTs had some common characteristics that helped them engage in actual change. The common characteristics include:

- Shared Vision and Model
- Multi-Level Leadership
- Culture of Learning
- Continually Improving
- Diverse Membership
- Value Relationships and Teamwork

This starter kit has essential steps you can take to help embed these ideas in the formation of your team. More information on these characteristics can be found in Appendix A.

Collaboration

For this kit, collaboration is defined as a group of people or organizations coming together to work toward a common goal. Teams that effectively collaborate are able to expand their knowledge about how different disciplines respond to sexual assault. This knowledge expansion allows them to engage in systems change and revise practice, policy, and procedures for a more supportive response for victims/survivors. Successful collaboration is not easy. It requires significant time and energy, and this requires a strong commitment from all represented agencies who participate in the SART. Successful SARTs improve the communication between agencies and help to reduce the confusion and frustration that victims/survivors often feel as they navigate the sexual assault response.

The term “collaboration” is often interchanged with cooperation and coordination. However, for the purposes of a SART, it is necessary to make these distinctions:

Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration
Informal relationships No common mission No shared structure or planning Authority retained by individual organizations Little to no risk for participants Limited impact results	More formal relationships Compatible missions Some shared structure and planning Authority retained by individual organizations Some risk for participants Moderate impact results	Durable and pervasive relationship Common mission Formal structure and comprehensive planning Authority determined by collaborative structure High risk for participants High impact results

In order to establish true collaboration, team members and their agencies must build relationships of trust and respect (see “Building Trust and Relationships” in the Readiness section). This process requires team members to be able to give and receive honest feedback, commit to changing practices that are harmful or ineffective, and to redefine what “success” looks like in their work. Teams that skip this process and move directly into change work frequently find it difficult to address the underlying issues, barriers, and biases that cause system breakdowns.

There are a number of barriers to successful collaboration in SART work that are important to recognize, including:

- Competing goals and values (personal, organizational, discipline-specific)
- Poor, limited, or unclear communication practices between individuals and agencies
- Tension between individuals, agencies, or disciplines
- Meeting logistics

As a newly formed team, it is essential to work with your team members and their agencies to find solutions to these common barriers. Below are some key questions to get you and your team started in these discussions.

Key Questions

- How are agencies in your community already working together/intersecting to address sexual assault or related forms of gender-based violence (sexual exploitation, domestic violence, child protection, etc.)?
- What obstacles have multidisciplinary partners experienced as a result of not having a SART or having a SART that was not successful in the past?
- How would victims/survivors directly benefit from the work of a systems-change SART?
- Do key agencies and players have the same understanding of the expectations and scope of the SART?

Tools and Resources

Appendix A: Characteristics of Effective Systems Change SARTs

Appendix B: SARTs and Systems Change Handout

Section Overview

- Determining Readiness
- Team Membership
- Role of Coordinator
- Building Trust and Relationships
- Key Questions
- Tools and Resources

Determining Readiness

There are many important factors to consider before beginning systems focused SART work. There are some communities where tensions are high, the service area is remote or isolated, or other community specific reasons why a typical SART might not be the best fit. While there is no guarantee that a SART would work in your community, taking time to answer the following questions will help you determine what your next steps could be.

A few questions to consider when assessing readiness:

1. Is our community committed to this work?

Successful teams have a shared understanding of the need for a response to sexual assault in your community. It is important to ensure stakeholders are committed to the process of systems change and to the goal of improving the systems responses for victims/survivors. These stakeholders include people who will be on the team, such as law enforcement and advocacy programs, as well as potentially other entities, such as local government. Before beginning a team, it is important to ensure that key players in the community have a shared understanding of the work that the team will do as well as the resources they will need to commit in order to see success. Many communities formalize these commitments through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will be discussed in the next section of this toolkit.

2. How knowledgeable are existing and/or proposed team members about sexual violence?

It is helpful for a SART team to have a strong knowledge base about sexual assault from the beginning. However, it is more important to determine the team's current knowledge and secure a commitment from members to learn more about the dynamics of sexual assault, the elements of the local response, and discipline-specific best practices. It is also important to assess the knowledge base and attitudes of potential team members. This can help determine if this is the right time for a team

to form or if there are beliefs that exist within key agencies that would need to be addressed before starting a team. An example of this would be if a key agency, such as law enforcement, believed that sexual assaults are always the fault of the victim. In this extreme example, SVJI would suggest communities work on strengthening relationships and the understanding of sexual assault dynamics before they formalize their work into a systems focused SART.

3. *What resources in our community can be used in this work?*

This question includes considerations such as time commitment, meeting space, size of community, and distance between agencies. You will also want to consider if there are any existing multidisciplinary collaborations that might be used to do the work of a SART. Determine if there are teams that may already be engaged in the type of systems change work you're hoping to achieve. Consider whether your team will require additional funding to support this collaboration as well as what funding sources might be available.

SVJI's Team Readiness Assessment (Appendix C) can help you answer many of these questions and plan your next steps.

Considerations Before You Begin

Once you feel confident that your community is ready to move forward with forming a SART, it is time to start the planning process!

Building Trust and Relationships

To truly effect change, teams must operate from a place of mutual trust and respect. Team members need to be able to speak openly and honestly with one another to address key tensions and conflicts that results in productive compromise or change. This process takes considerable time and should be started right away. Although traditional team-building activities can be effective, relationship building can often be as simple as taking the time to get to know one another and building rapport. While the interpersonal aspects of building trust may take a while, one way to help secure buy-in and set the stage for solid relationships is through formalizing the relationships, which will be discussed in the Starting Section.

It is important to note that a SART is not necessarily the right fit for every community. Some communities may not have the capacity to convene a comprehensive multidisciplinary team. If a SART is not right for your community, you may consider other types of collaborations. There are many ways to creating meaningful improvements in the response to sexual assault even if a traditional SART is not currently possible. Please reach out to SVJI if you want help thinking about what might work in your community!

Team Membership

SART members have specific roles and responsibilities – primarily, they serve as subject matter experts for their discipline, they represent their agency, and they provide a critical bridge for communication between the SART and their respective agency. In addition, SART members often play a significant role in implementing changes in their agency based on team decisions.

Ideally, SARTs include membership from at least the following five key disciplines:

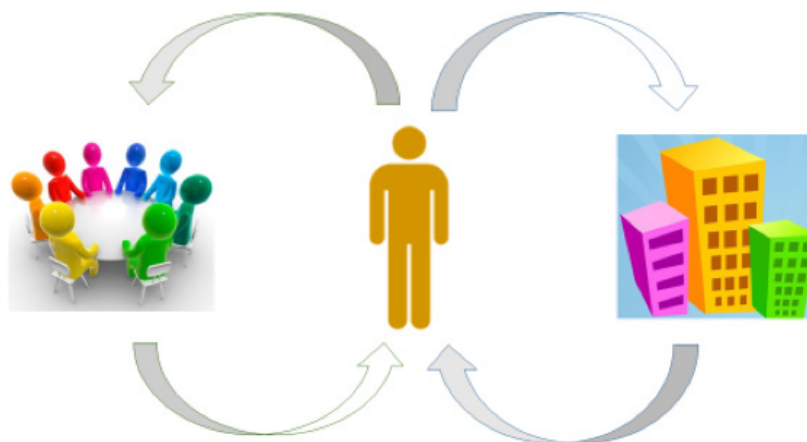
- Advocacy
- Law Enforcement
- Health Professionals
- Prosecution
- Corrections and Probation (for some communities)

Many teams also include representatives from other key points of disclosure or places where victims/survivors access help. These additional representatives are often mental health professionals, colleges/universities, other non-profit agencies, and/or faith communities.

Membership should also reflect the make-up of the community, and teams should find ways to engage culturally-specific communities and agencies from the very beginning. This work starts with the team formation and should be present in every step of the work. The meaningful engagement of these critical partners will ensure that a community's response meets the needs of victims and survivors from the various and diverse populations within that community.

SART members, while bringing their individual expertise to the table, are there as representatives of their agencies. This means that participating agencies must grant the team member the authority to represent their agency's viewpoints and priorities. SARTs are most effective when there is a mix of frontline responders and administrators on the team. You will want to consider which representation makes the most sense from each agency involved.

Team Member and Agency Communications



Role of Coordinator

An effective SART usually requires a dedicated team coordinator, typically from within one of the member agencies. The individual designated as the SART coordinator should not be considered a representative of their agency during the team meetings but should act as a neutral party that helps focus and direct the team's work. The team coordinator is often responsible for leading and facilitating team meetings and ensuring the team maintains a collaborative and respectful environment. The coordinator serves as a point of contact for questions and information about the team's work. Coordinators can also facilitate team meetings and track team tasks (see "The Team Process" in the Starting section for more information).

The role of team coordinator is often determined by a team's funding source, the agency receiving the funding for the leadership of the SART. Many teams do not have funding for team coordination and development and must decide what agency can support the extra work of coordination. However, there is no rule about which discipline or agency should be responsible for coordinating a SART. There are many factors that might be involved in determining who will coordinate the work, including funding, staff capacity, relationships with other agencies, or availability of meeting space.

In addition to a coordinator, SARTs need an effective facilitator to keep meetings structured and focused, mediate conflicts, and ensure that team members are able to express their ideas and views. Although the coordinator often takes on the role of facilitator, this is not the only option. In some communities, the facilitator of the meeting rotates. In others, there is a standing facilitator or a co-facilitator model. Sometimes, these are people who are not the coordinator. This is often done with the intent of increasing participation and buy-in from certain agencies. It can also be useful on teams based on interpersonal dynamics, such as if the facilitator is a well-respected member of the community and the coordinator is new to the community.

Regardless of the coordination or facilitation structure you begin with, you should always be aware of the needs of the team to see if the structure needs to be adjusted. Below are some key questions to help your team get started.

Key Questions

- Is your community able to sustain a SART, or would a different collaboration model work better?
- Are there any key people or organizations missing from the team?
- Who else needs to be at the table to build a culturally-responsive systems response that meets the needs of all victims/survivors in your community?
- What agency is in the best position to take on coordination of your community's SART work?
- How will team members learn about one another's roles and obligations?
- What resources are available to use in this work?

Tools and Resources

Appendix C: Team Readiness Assessment

Appendix D: Considerations for Team Formation

STARTING

Section Overview

- Setting the Stage
- Initial Meetings
- Essential Components during Team Formation
- Key Questions
- Tools and Resources

Setting the Stage before the First Meeting

Now that you've assessed readiness and done the initial planning, you are ready to begin the more concrete work that is part of forming a SART. Begin by convening the key players you identified initially. For the first meeting, find a time and a place that will work well for the majority of members. When planning the agenda for the first meeting, understand that although you and/or the team may want to move directly into the work of systems change, protocol creation, or case review, it is critical to build a strong foundation for collaboration and communication as your first steps.

When engaging in systems change work, the little things during these early stages are important. These details include making agreements about how the team will do the work. You can look at what has been successful in other communities, but you will need to find what works best for your team. Only your community can decide on these agreements, as there are many different formats and ideas.

Important considerations include:

- Dates, location, frequency, and duration of meetings
- How information will be shared between team members and participating agencies
- The process by which decisions will be made
- The roles, responsibilities, and expectations of individual team members and participating agencies, including the expected time commitment outside of meetings. These are often formalized through memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

To ensure effective and productive meetings, teams should consider what tasks are necessary for the entire team to be involved in and which tasks may be completed by individuals or subcommittees.

Initial Meetings

The time has come! You have set the date for the first meeting and have invited people to the table. Now, the team's work begins in a different way.

The first meetings of a SART is a critical point – these are where you set the tone, establish team norms and values, and develop a cohesive understanding of the team's work.

Sometimes, there may be team members who are not sure the SART will be a valuable use of their time or are unsure of being there. The first meetings can help you create buy-in and better establish why the team exists. With that, it is important to have a concrete plan for what you want to accomplish during the meeting and to share this agenda with your team.

Some of the first items on your agenda should include:

- Detailed introductions from all team members, giving an overview of their role in the systems response to sexual assault
 - ◊ This is important even if you all think you know each other. The work of a team requires learning about community systems in a different way. Part of that is truly emphasizing the unique role of each discipline and working to highlight the connection points between systems.
- Initial agreement on the team's overall scope and mission
- Compile and share team member list and contact information
- Establish meeting processes and logistics – it is ideal to set a standing date/time/location for all future meetings if possible
- Planning for next steps and action items from the meeting

Depending on you and your team, this might seem like too much or too little for first meetings. In order to maximize your time together, you may want to have other topics or discussions prepared. You want to build momentum, get people in the routine of working within meetings, as well as set a strong foundation for the team's ongoing work.

Other important tasks to cover in the first few meetings are:

- Gain agreement on rules of conduct, processes for decision-making, shared norms and values
- Determine the knowledge base of team members regarding sexual violence issues and the response
- Explore current realities of sexual violence in your community
- Map the current systems response

While there are many things that teams should explore in the early stages of meeting, the next sections will highlight a few of the areas that you may want to emphasize as you build your team.

Formalizing Commitments

Changes to the systems response to sexual assault cannot be made or implemented without multi-level leadership and agency buy-in. In order to hold all member agencies accountable to the team process, as well as any outcomes generated, teams find it helpful to enter into an agreement that formalizes the commitment of member agencies to:

- Allocate resources and staff time to support their agency's role on the team
- Grant individual representatives the authority to fully participate in the team process as an agency representative
- Take steps to fully implement and evaluate changes adopted by the team

The process of formalizing commitments may look different depending on your team's needs. Some groups may choose to sign a written document, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or Interagency Agreement. Other teams may prefer a less formal approach, where they create an agreed-upon set of standards for group members to follow. The important thing is that the team develops a consistent set of expectations for each member.

Creating an MOU can seem confusing, but there are many examples out there to help guide you in this work. We have included a Sample MOU in the Appendix F to help you in this process. When creating an MOU, the core elements to include are:

- History
- Purpose
- Role of Agencies
- Team Member Roles and Responsibilities
- Resources/Obligations
- Signatures of Decision Makers

Developing the Team's Mission Statement

One of the first tasks during the initial stages of team formation is developing a mission statement and accompanying vision statement or set of statements. The mission statement serves as the anchor for the team for years to come. Additionally, the mission and vision statements define and guide the team's work, provide parameters of accountability, and communicate the direction and focus of the team.

Mission Statement

Mission statements answer the following questions:

- 1. Who are you?** This is the easiest part of the mission statement. It is the name of the group or team and should probably describe the service area (for example, the "_____ County Sexual Assault Response Team).
- 2. What do you do?** Focus in on the big picture view of the team's work. Try to concisely articulate the end goal the team is trying to achieve (for example, "increases access to specialized services and support, and improves the multidisciplinary response").
- 3. Who benefits?** Knowing the people you aim to serve will help keep the team centered. You will have the power to ask, "For whom do we do this work?" Keep this part focused on the main population (for example, "victims of sexual assault).

Putting the above examples together, a mission statement might read like this:

"The _____ County Sexual Assault Response Team increases access to specialized services and support and improves the multidisciplinary response for victims of sexual assault."

A mission statement typically changes very little over time. It is worthwhile to revisit the mission on occasion to ensure it is still relevant and meaningful. However, the overarching purpose of the team should always be to improve the systems response to sexual assault.

Scope of Initial Work

This is the time for teams to really talk about their purpose and scope. Some teams at this point want to think about how they define community: is it a town, a county, multiple jurisdictions? Team formation and mission development is also a time to ensure that people are on the same page about the work of the team. Key considerations may include will the team focus on adults (which SVJI recommends) or will it have a dual or multi-purpose focus? The guiding questions will also help teams parse out what their plan is regarding the work. Do they exist solely for protocol revision? Does it fall within the work of the team to do education and outreach? Answering these questions at this point will help guide the trajectory of the team. To help you get started, there is a mission and vision worksheet in Appendix H.

Establish Group Norms and Values

It is often helpful for multidisciplinary teams to set ground rules with one another for how they plan to communicate and work together. Establishing these “norms” or agreements will help keep teams productive, respectful, and united. These agreements can be operational, such as:

- Arrive at meetings prepared and on time
- One person talks at a time
- Stick to the agenda
- Develop common definitions for terms

Team agreements can also be more philosophical, designed to foster a collaborative environment:

- Assume positive intent
- Be courageous
- Ask questions

When doing systems change work, discussions can become intense and multiple viewpoints are expressed. Teams have to know how to work through those conversations. Setting these group norms and posting them in the meeting room can help refocus the team on the ultimate goal of serving victims/survivors.

Member Roles and Expectations

The expectations for each team member should be clearly agreed upon and understood by individuals and their agencies. As talked about under “Team Membership” in the Readiness section, it is important for SART members to act as a liaison between their agency and the team. People need to talk about how they will solicit input and share feedback between the SART and their agency. If the person at the table is not able to make decisions, they need to have an understanding about how they will bring the information to the decision makers. It can be helpful to include the specific details in the formal commitment signed by member agencies, such as in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is done at team formation or at protocol creation, as well as in the team agreements.

Documentation

A critical part of creating a functional and sustainable team is to document processes and decisions. This allows agency leadership as well as new team members to be fully apprised of key team activities to date, including the “how,” “what,” and “why” of decisions and actions. Minutes should be taken during each meeting and distributed to team members (see Sample Agenda in the Appendix G). Teams should have an agreed-upon method for documenting their work and orienting new team members.

Key Questions

- What is the team's plan to formalize commitment? If signing an MOU, how often will the MOU be revisited?
- Does the team's mission statement succinctly communicate the intent and impact of the team's work?
- What is the team process?
 - ◊ How will the work be structured?
 - ◊ When will the team meet?
 - ◊ Where will the team meet?
 - ◊ How often will the team meet (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly)?
 - ◊ How long will the meetings last (1 hours, 2 hours, etc)?

Tools and Resources

Appendix E: Meeting Facilitation Tips for SARTs

Appendix F: Sample MOU

Appendix G: Sample agenda

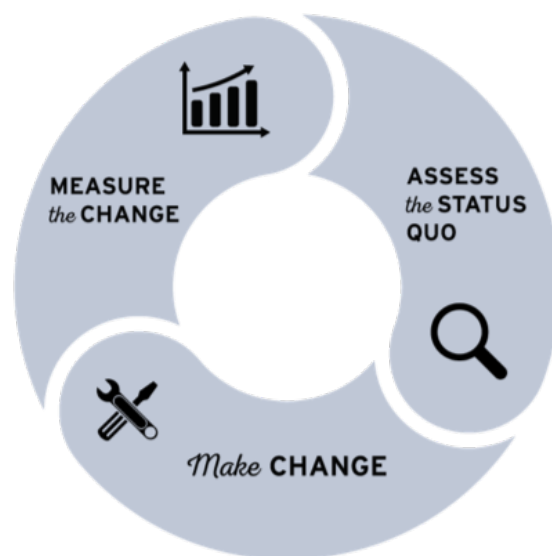
Appendix F: Mission and Vision Development Handout

MOVING FORWARD

You've started! Now what?

New collaborations have the benefit of a clean slate - very few existing expectations or habits that sometimes makes the process of systems change more challenging. However, starting something new is challenging in its own right. It's important that coordinators or their project champions don't undersell the commitment and expectations for what will be involved in the work the team selects. Change can happen in many ways. At its best, team collaboration is an investment in deeper system improvements that are more difficult to accomplish on a case by case or agency to agency basis. Coming together as a team often provides immediate benefits such as understanding or clarifying agency roles and responsibilities in responding to sexual assault. Some results come later in the process, after individuals and agencies develop the trust necessary to risk exposing strengths and weaknesses in their current response.

Once your SART is established, it is time to begin the work of making systemic changes. Here is where the preparation and relationship building will be crucial. Your team will need to look at the current systems response and find ways to strengthen and improve it. This will result in changes to individual practice and agency policies as well as improvements in the communication between agencies. Once these changes are made, the team must determine if the changes have improved the experiences and outcomes for victims/survivors. Then, the cycle begins again. This systems change process can be difficult, frustrating, and slow. It is also rewarding, exciting, and creates long-lasting change. The impact on victims/survivors, your community, and the work of responders will be greatly improved by taking the time to collaboratively work towards change.



With that, we want to leave you with a few things you will want to pay attention to as your team moves from formation to action.

- Prepare for turnover from the beginning. Think about how things will be documented, institutionalized, and shared with new team members.
- Hold each other accountable. Accountability is an active commitment to take the necessary actions to ensure the improvement of the sexual violence response. It is difficult but necessary.

- Take time to celebrate the forward momentum and victories, no matter how small.
- Keep focused on the mission. It is your guiding star in the work that you do. When conflict arises, new ideas distract from the current work of the team, or hard decisions need to be made, refer back to the mission as a way to navigate through the challenges.
- You are not alone. There are SARTs all around the country doing similar work. Many have faced triumphs and challenges that you will see in your team. Build connections with other team leaders, experts within your state/territory, and national experts on teaming or discipline specific work.

By taking time to be intentional in the way you start your SART, you are setting it up for future success. Through this Starter Kit, the SVJI team hopes that we have helped to set your team up to be a strong and lasting force for change within your community.

REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Characteristics of a Successful Team handout

Appendix B: Sexual Assault Response Teams and Systems Change

Appendix C: Team Readiness Assessment

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Appendix A:



- **Characteristic 1: Hold a shared vision and model of the system response**

A comprehensive and shared understanding of how the system currently operates is important because it guides the development of SART principles and protocols. This shared understanding creates a framework for decision-making. By emphasizing a “big picture” focus, teams stay motivated and attentive to the broader response and purpose. Working in collaboration brings together different parts of the system, developing cross-disciplinary knowledge and understanding. Each organization within the system has its own unique experience and positional perspective, contributing invaluable insights into current practices and collectively envisioning how the system response can improve.

- **Characteristic 2: Foster a culture of learning**

SARTs must confront a variety of complex and changing situations. A learning culture emphasizes understanding each situation, documenting successes and setbacks, identifying change strategies, and applying that information to continually improve. A SART with a strong culture of learning also seeks out and embraces new opportunities to learn from local and national experts and colleagues. Training and technical assistance is valued, and the team views change as an opportunity to innovate practice. The team and all of its member organizations must embrace and encourage this type of learning to evolve from reactively solving problems, to proactively making changes to create a system response that they truly desire.

- **Characteristic 3: Work towards continual improvement**

SART members and their organizations work to understand the broader experience of victims/survivors in the systemic response to sexual assault. Continual assessment and evaluation reveal what is and is not working, thus illuminating deeper issues that may not be apparent to any single system responder. Perceived effectiveness is highest among SARTs that regularly use evaluation to assess their work. While it can be difficult for SARTs to do comprehensive evaluations on a regular basis because of a lack of resources, effective teams use methods such as interviews with responders, group interviews with victims/survivors, satisfaction surveys, and case review to better understand the response and make improvements.

- **Characteristic 4: Benefit from diverse membership**

The multi-disciplinary emphasis of systemic change requires members to think beyond the boundaries of their own institutions and disciplines. Different organizational workers possess unique networks, assets, and points of leverage. Teams that include a core group of law enforcement, medical personnel, prosecution, and advocacy thrive because of this multi-dimensional approach to improving the response to sexual violence.

Characteristic 5: Require multi-level leadership

While many SARTs have a designated leader or facilitator, responsibility and power are equitably distributed through the team and their organizations. Team members must consult with their respective organizations, including their leadership, for approval and implementation of SART activities, which ensures that all team actions gain the support of the member organization. This support is pivotal to the overall success of the systems response and creates consistency among all responders, not just the individuals who are on the SART.

- **Characteristic 6: Value relationships and collaboration**

While SART members are representing many disciplines with defined roles, they see themselves working together as one unit. Collaboration is the vehicle for change in SARTs; and strong relationships create the environment for change. Communication is the glue that keeps teams together, taking place during and between team meetings. Relationship-building requires intentional work in the beginning of a SART's development, and continual attention as time goes on. This creates a safe place for members to have challenging conversations and tackle tough issues. By centering and sharing their perspectives around the common objectives of assisting sexual assault victims/survivors and improving the criminal justice system, team members foster a sense of shared purpose, trust, and momentum for change.

Appendix B:



Sexual Assault Response Teams & Systems Change

What is a SART?

A Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is one strategy a community can use to improve their systems response to sexual violence. A team is made up of multi-disciplinary representatives who focus on collaboration for systems change. This typically includes law enforcement, prosecution, advocacy, medical, and corrections. Some communities also invite representatives from other disciplines, such as mental health, culturally specific groups, campus systems, or any primary point of disclosure or entry into help-seeking. There are two types of SARTs: Acute Response SARTs and Systems Change SARTs. Acute Response SARTs focus on a singular case and the responding individuals. The results of Acute Response SARTs are usually small and targeted to those involved. Systems Change SARTs focus on multiple cases and the agencies involved throughout the cases. The results of Systems Change SARTs are usually long-term and widespread. Each community must decide which type of SART works for them.

What is Systems Change?

Systems change is working towards improving individual systems response to sexual violence while also increasing collaboration between systems. Systems changes SARTs focus on:

- Enhancing the strengths of practice, policy, procedures, and collaboration
- Addressing the shortcomings of practice, policy, procedures, and collaboration
- Ensuring support and engagement for victims throughout all processes
- Continuously improving as time and communities change

Systems Change can impact individual practices, agency policies, systems procedures, and interagency collaboration. Systems Change SARTs are making changes as they need to best meet the needs of victims/survivors as well as staying current on promising practices and new legislation. For more information on SARTs or Systems Change, reach us at svji@mncasa.org.

Phases of Systems Change

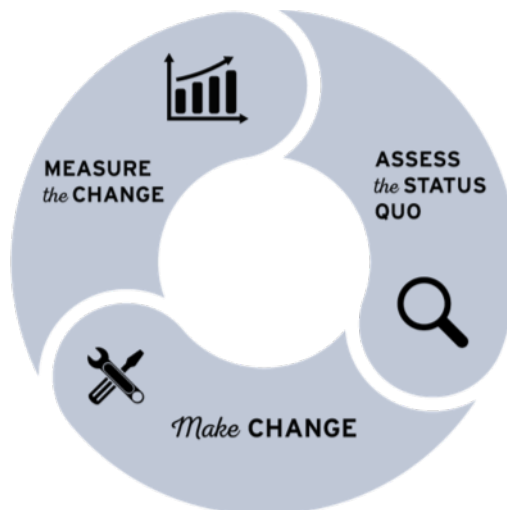
How do SARTs do Systems Change?

One continuous improvement model for SARTs to follow is the Sexual Violence Justice Institute's Phases of Systems Change. This includes three phases that teams can guide teams as they work together in improving the response to sexual violence.

1. Assess the Status Quo
 - Learn about current response and experience
2. Make Change
 - Use ASQ info to target improvements
3. Measure the Change
 - Check effectiveness/outcome of the changes made

Measure the Change

- Monitor implementation of change
- Assess gaps and barriers
- Surveys, Focus Groups
- Case Review



Assess the Status Quo

- Take inventory of existing service providers
- Bring in the voices of victims/survivors
- Community Needs Assessment

Make Change

- Develop/revise interagency protocol
- Identify training needs (knowledge/skills)
 - Create programs/tools/resources

Appendix C:

Team Readiness Assessment

Date: _____

Community: _____

The following survey can be used to assess a multi-disciplinary team's readiness to collaborate. There is no expectation that any team would be fully "ready" in each of these areas, so responses should reflect the current reality. This survey can be used to assess where agencies may need more information, overall interest and understanding of the process, communication gaps, information gaps, and the current state of collaboration.

Team composition

To what extent does the composition of your team reflect community and project need?

Our existing or proposed team has:	Very True	Somewhat True	Don't Know	Somewhat Untrue	Not True
Active membership from each of the core agencies (law enforcement, medical, prosecution, victim advocacy, corrections).					
The needed representation from both criminal justice and community based agencies that will help to improve services to all victims in our communities.					
Members who are knowledgeable about their agency's current response to sexual assault.					
Members who are respected professionals in their agency and discipline.					
Participating agencies whose leadership is fully informed of the project's goals and requirements.					
Members who have the ability to make decisions and commitments on behalf of their agency.					

Commitment of Participating Agencies/Team Members:

Please rate the extent to which proposed and/or existing participating agencies have demonstrated their commitment to the project in the following areas:

Each participating agency will:	Very True	Somewhat True	Don't Know	Somewhat Untrue	Not True
Commit to enable consistent representation on the team (e.g. have the same people attend as much as possible).					
Support their team representative's regular attendance at monthly team meetings.					
Support their team representative's use of time to be actively involved in the team's projects.					
Support the design, review, training, monitoring and evaluation of protocol for responding to sexual violence and commit to having all of their staff use it.					
Invest in-kind resources such as meeting space, mileage reimbursements, and additional staff time for team activities.					
Look for additional ways to make the project successful in improving the response to sexual assault victims/survivors.					

Current Understanding of Sexual Assault:

How knowledgeable are existing and/or proposed team members about sexual violence?

Our team members are knowledgeable about:	Very True	Somewhat True	Don't Know	Somewhat Untrue	Not True
Common reactions victims/survivors of sexual violence experience.					
The criminal justice response to sexual assault.					
Who the victims and perpetrators of sexual violence are					
How to professionally, respectfully, and comfortably interact with victims/survivors.					
How a victim-centered response differs from a system-centered response.					
The common misconceptions surrounding sexual violence.					
The 'best practices' for their own field/discipline/agency for responding to sexual violence.					
The roles of other team members' and their agencies in the response to sexual violence					

Project fit with existing efforts and community goals

To what extent will participation in this project fit into and/or further existing goals of the team and its participating agencies?

Project participation is a good fit with our team because:	Very True	Somewhat True	Don't Know	Somewhat Untrue	Not True
Each participating agency knows how it furthers their agency goals.					
Each participating agency has the resources it needs to actively participate.					
The time is right for this collaborative project.					
There is general support for this project within the communities served by our participating agencies.					

General Team Preparation:

To what extent is the team ready to begin this project?

Our team has:	Very True	Somewhat True	Don't Know	Somewhat Untrue	Not True
Can identify a team coordinator/ agency that will have the time and skills required to lead the project.					
Members who recognize a need for an improved, more coordinated response to sexual assault cases.					
Members who are generally flexible and open to exploring different ways to achieve team goals.					
Participating agencies that encourage communication among staff in both formal meetings and informal ways.					
Willing to sign memorandums of understanding or other signed agreements between the core agencies that support team's mission.					
Members willing to engage in in-depth discussions and make compromises in an effort to better serve victims/survivors of sexual assault.					
Members who are dedicated to the idea that we can make this project happen.					
Members who believe that what the team will accomplish would be difficult for any one agency to do by them.					

Considerations for Team Formation

Communities can meaningfully improve and strengthen the systems' response to sexual violence through establishing a multidisciplinary team like a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). While every community is different, there are a few key decisions that require consideration early in the process of team formation. As you form a collaborative team to address sexual violence cases, below are key points to discuss with your team.

Team Purpose and Outcomes

Groups must answer why they want to develop a team and what they hope to accomplish. Knowing what an individual or agency hopes to achieve in the short-term and long-term orients your team and shapes the scope of the collaborative efforts. Through continuous improvement processes, your team can achieve their purpose.

Existing or Similar Teams

Determine if your community already has a pre-existing team or if there are similar teams that already meet. Determine if or how you might cooperate with these teams. Additionally, how will you differentiate and focus on sexual violence in your meetings as well as support agencies as they work on multiple teams.

Size of Service Area for Team

Communities and agencies have differing limits to the size of their service areas. Teams can be based upon city limits, county limits, or multi-county regions. This is dependent upon community make-up and where providers give services to victims/survivors. This will help determine who should be involved with the team. This conversation should also include jurisdiction conversations—especially if there are multiple counties, tribal lands, federal lands, or state lines.

Team Membership

Team members should be from community agencies that respond to sexual violence and have the capacity to change current practices, policies, and protocols. Most teams are created with core agencies such as community advocacy, law enforcement, medical providers, prosecution, and corrections/probation. The individuals who attend meetings do so as a representative of their agency. Other agencies should reflect the community and are critical points of sexual violence disclosure such as military installations, colleges/university, or adult protections.

Coordinating and/or Facilitating the Team

Typically, one agency takes the lead for supporting the team's work and houses the team coordinator. This agency may serve as the fiscal agent for team funding. Teams should establish who will oversee logistical support for the team as well as how participating agencies will contribute to the coordination, facilitation, and completion of activities. Team success is the responsibility of all agencies and all members.

Formalizing Agency Commitments

Teams benefit from having an interagency agreement, memorandum of understanding, or a joint letter of commitment. These agreements describe the work of the team including purpose, participation expectations, in-kind contributions, and limitations. Formalized commitments also ensure that despite turnover, agencies still understand their roles and responsibilities in the success of the team. These agreements should be signed by the head of each agency and/or the governing body. Many funding entities require agreements as a condition of funding a project.

Team Meetings

In the early steps of team formation, the group must decide how often and where to meet as a team. In the early years of an SART, we recommend once monthly meetings to ensure that the team can function effectively. Over time, the frequency may increase or decrease depending on the team's projects. Teams can either choose a static location or may wish to rotate meeting locations, depending on factors like how far providers have to travel to attend meetings or meeting space availability.

Including Victims/Survivors

It is necessary to incorporate the voices and experiences of victims/survivors, and each team must decide how they will do so. Some teams choose an advisory council, a review committee, or a data/information collection project. There are many opportunities to learn from victims/survivors; choose the approach that will be most beneficial to victims/survivors and service providers.

Is a SART a Good Fit for Our Community?

Not all communities benefit from a traditional SART. Take time to explore your resources and options about different collaborative formations. Choose whichever one will result in meaningful change to the sexual violence response in your community. SVJI is here to help with any of these topics and more.

Appendix E:

Meeting Facilitation Tips for SARTs

Many SART coordinators and facilitators have not had formal training on how to convene people and run meetings. This can lead to meetings where both the facilitator and team members are frustrated. This tool is meant to give some tips and ideas to help you in your role.

Running the meeting (Facilitating)

In the meeting, strong facilitation is essential to moving the work of the team forward. While facilitation styles may vary based on individual styles and skills, here are some tips that can help within the SART meeting.

- Teams benefit from having established ground rules for within meeting interactions and decision making. This should be established early on in the team formation, shared with new team members, and revisited as needed.
- Vary the format of the meeting – including things such as small group discussions, activities, trainings, and large group discussions can help accommodate different learning styles and encourage engagement from all members.
- Clearly discuss with the group the purpose of the meeting—at the beginning of the meeting.
 - ◊ If there are new team members or team members who have missed meetings, it is important that they receive information beforehand about the work of the team. For new team members, that includes a longer process of ensuring they understand the focus and scope of the team. By providing information in advance, it can help to limit cyclical conversations.
- Refer to the agenda and keep discussion focused on the meeting objectives.
 - ◊ This might include re-focusing conversation if it gets off-topic or starts to introduce new topics that would be better addressed at a future meeting.
 - ◊ Some teams set time limits for each section of their agenda to help ensure that all needed things are given adequate time for consideration and discussion.
 - ◊ Having the team mission on the agenda or otherwise posted in the room can serve as a reference point if the team
- Provide information, not opinions. It is okay to not know all of the answers in the moment.

- Give participants time to think and process information.
 - ◊ This can be aided by having needed information available before the meeting
- Encourage input from all participants and respect everyone's opinion.
 - ◊ Check-in with team members if they regularly do not participate. See if there are things that can be done to help them participate more, even outside of the meeting times.
 - ◊ If certain members speak too much, exert power within situations, or discourage others from participating in discussions through their actions, this needs to be addressed either through the facilitator re-focusing the team, taking steps to respectfully but assertively allow other people to talk, or talked about with the individual outside of the meeting.
 - ◊ If a person becomes too disruptive to the work of the team or refuses to engage, you may need to consider seeking another representative from that agency.
- Tie together various comments, questions, and concerns raised in discussions.
- Observe body language and respond appropriately. This response might be within the meeting or outside of the meeting.
- End the meeting with a review of next steps and clarifying decisions that were made that day.

If the coordinator or current facilitator has issues facilitating the meeting (such as multiple meetings that feel unproductive or negative), it may benefit the team to explore having co-facilitators or a new facilitator. This might mean engaging with an influential team member to help build relationships or focus on the work of the team.

Appendix F:

2019 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

_____ County
Sexual Assault Response Team
Coordinating Agency

The mission of _____ County Sexual Assault Response Team (CSART) is to coordinate and implement an interagency response to sexual assault victims which promotes consistency, respect, and cultural responsiveness.

Phone Number

The participating entities herein share certain community goals and purposes when providing victim-centered care through medical, advocacy, law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, institutions of higher education, county and community human services, and other agencies. The team has been meeting regularly since YEAR and has created and updated its interagency response protocol X times since its inception.

In order for the CSAPT to fulfill this mission, participating agencies and organizations that respond to sexual assault victims must be active and engaged team members, and must make every effort to comply with the procedures set forth in the protocol as their resources allow.

Participating agencies signing this Memorandum of Understanding agree to fulfill the roles and responsibilities outlined here to the best of their abilities and as their resources allow.

Role of participating agencies & organizations

- Be committed to the victim-centered and offender-focused CSAPT protocol
- Maintain leadership support for the development and implementation of the interagency protocol and other goals of the team
- Ensure that the team meetings are a priority for their agency or institution and their representative
- Provide regular updates to agency leadership about the work of the team
- Actively support training and other information-sharing within the agency to ensure implementation of protocol throughout the agency
- Actively support the use of case consultation or case reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses of protocol or of implementation within the agency

Team member roles and responsibilities

- Be committed to the victim-centered and offender-focused CSAPT protocol
- Revise and implement written protocol
- Be versed in their agency's role in sexual assault cases
- Be able to speak about the ability of their agency to fulfill obligations related to the multidisciplinary process
- Commit to 10 of the 12 regularly attend meetings and actively participate in discussions and subcommittees
- Identify and address relevant trends and gaps in services, with an emphasis on constructive problem-solving

Authorized Signatures

Authorized person for: County Sexual Assault Protocol Team (CSAPT)

_____	_____
Name, Title	Date

Authorized person for: _____
(Agency/Organization)

_____	_____
Signature	Date

_____	_____
Print Name	Title

Appendix G:

SAMPLE Agenda

TEAM LOGO (IF APPLICABLE)

LOCATION/AGENCY NAME

Meeting Location Address

Parking Instructions Here

Agenda for DATE

1:45-2:00p	Professional Networking Time
2:00-2:15p	Welcome and Team/Agency Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Events
2:15-2:45p	Transitions and Revised Work Plan Review
2:45-3:15p	Legal Protocol Draft Finalization <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring final comments and changes to meeting
3:15-3:45p	Renewal of MOUs and Training Ideas
4:00pm	Closing

Next Meeting: DATE
Held at: AGENCY TITLE
LOCATION ADDRESS

Team Mission: Have mission on every agenda to have people reference.

SAMPLE Ground Rules for Meetings to Ensure Team Engagement

Ground Rules for SARTeam

1. Show up on time and Be Prepared
 - a. Be prompt in arriving
 - b. Be prepared to contribute
 - c. Attend all meetings
2. Contribute to Meeting Goals
 - a. Participate by sharing ideas and asking questions
 - b. Share your unique perspective on the discussion
 - c. Offer a solution when disagreeing with a proposal
3. Respect
 - a. Share time so that all can participate
 - b. Be patient when listening to others and do not interrupt
 - c. Respect each other's thinking and value everyone's contributions
4. Record Outcomes and follow up
 - a. Record issues discussed, decisions made and tasks assigned
 - b. Share meeting notes with other stakeholders that should be kept in the loop
5. Etc. You can have as many or as few ground rules for the respective team as you think are necessary

Upcoming Meeting Dates and Locations

- June 22, 2016—LOCATION NAME
- July 27, 2016— LOCATION NAME
- August 24, 2016— LOCATION NAME

Appendix H:

Mission Builder

Who Are You:

What Do You Do:

Who Benefits:

Put it all together in a single, revised statement:

Vision and Scope of Work Planning

What will be the end result of the team's work in 2-5 years? How will the response be different or what will all victims/survivors be able to say as a result of our work?

What do I (and my agency) currently know about the sexual violence response? (Strengths and needed improvements) What do we need to learn?

What do I (and my agency) see as the top priorities, issues, and/or needs that the team must address to improve outcomes for victims/survivors?

How will we measure the results of our goals and priorities?

How does this scope of work and vision relate back to the team's mission and areas of impact?

