



Supporting Justice Involved Victim-Survivors of Sexual Violence

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Background

- Advocacy, Medical Forensic, and Prevention Programs Manager at MNCASA
- Criminal Legal Advocate, Shelter Advocate, and Children's Advocacy Center
- Master's of Social Work from University of Michigan/ Bachelor's of Social Work University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire
- Other work in higher education and public health



Background



- Bachelor's Degree in Victim Studies from Sam Houston State University
- Master's Degree in Victim Services Management from Sam Houston State University
- 4 years at 360 Communities as Outreach Advocate
- 1.5 years at HOPE Coalition as Outreach Manager
- Prior experience as a jailer and court-appointed guardian for adults with developmental disabilities

- General Overview of MN Department of Corrections
- Recommendations when working with justice involved victim-survivors
- Reflection on biases and challenges of working with individuals who have caused harm



- **Part 1: Supporting Justice-Involved Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence**

- Objectives:

- Tangible skills and knowledge for serving Victims in Prisons

- **Part 2: Analyzing the Victim/Harm-Doer Binary**

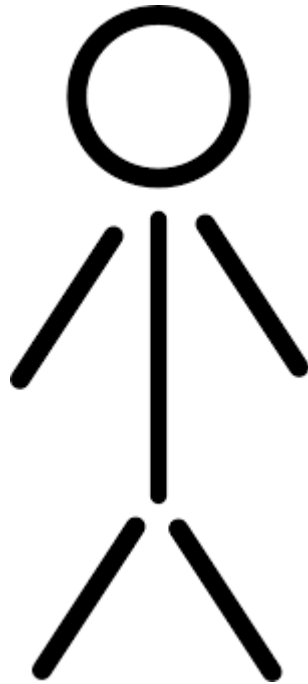
- Objectives:

- Acknowledge discomfort advocates may have working with survivors who may have caused harm, particularly when advocates are survivors themselves
- Identify ways advocates may perpetuate the victim/harm-doer binary and its impact on services

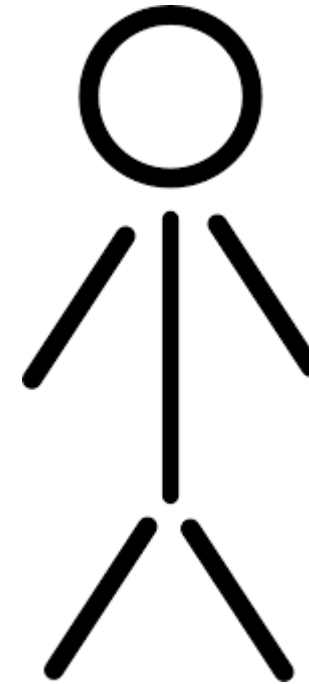
What is a **worry, concern, fear, or resistance** that comes up for you when you think about working with a victim-survivor who is incarcerated?

What do you know? What do you not know?

- Survivor in Community



- Survivor in Custody



Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Prisons and Jails



Approximately 200,000 adults are sexually abused behind bars every year in the U.S.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011–12, May 2013.

Individuals at Increased Risk

Incarcerated people who face an increased risk of sexual victimization:	
People who have a mental illness or developmental disability	> 3X more likely than the overall population
Previously Sexually Victimized	6X more likely
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual	> 6X more likely
Transgender	> 8X more likely

Source: Beck, Berzofsky, Caspar, & Krebs (2013), *Sexual Victimization in Prisons and jails reported by inmates, 2011-2012*. © Just Detention International.



MN Department of Corrections

What is the difference between DOC and jail?

What does the population look like?

Corrections in Minnesota



Facility Type	Number of Facilities	Level of Crime	Sentence Time
County (Jail)	93 (87 counties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misdemeanor• Gross misdemeanor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 90 days or less• 1 year or less
State (Prison)	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Felony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 year plus a day, or more
Federal (Prison)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misdemeanor• Felony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 year or less• 1 year plus a day, or more
Private	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any

Overview of MN DOC



Incarcerated population: 8,400 (approx.)

Juveniles: Red Wing (60)

Women: Shakopee (566)

Men: 7,750 (approx.)

Level 2 Togo (62), Willow River (121)

Level 2 & 3 Faribault (1925)

Level 2 & 3 Lino Lakes (1082)

Level 3 Moose Lake (1013)

Level 4 St. Cloud (Intake) (1050)

Level 2 & 4 Stillwater (1214)

Level 4 Rush City (923)

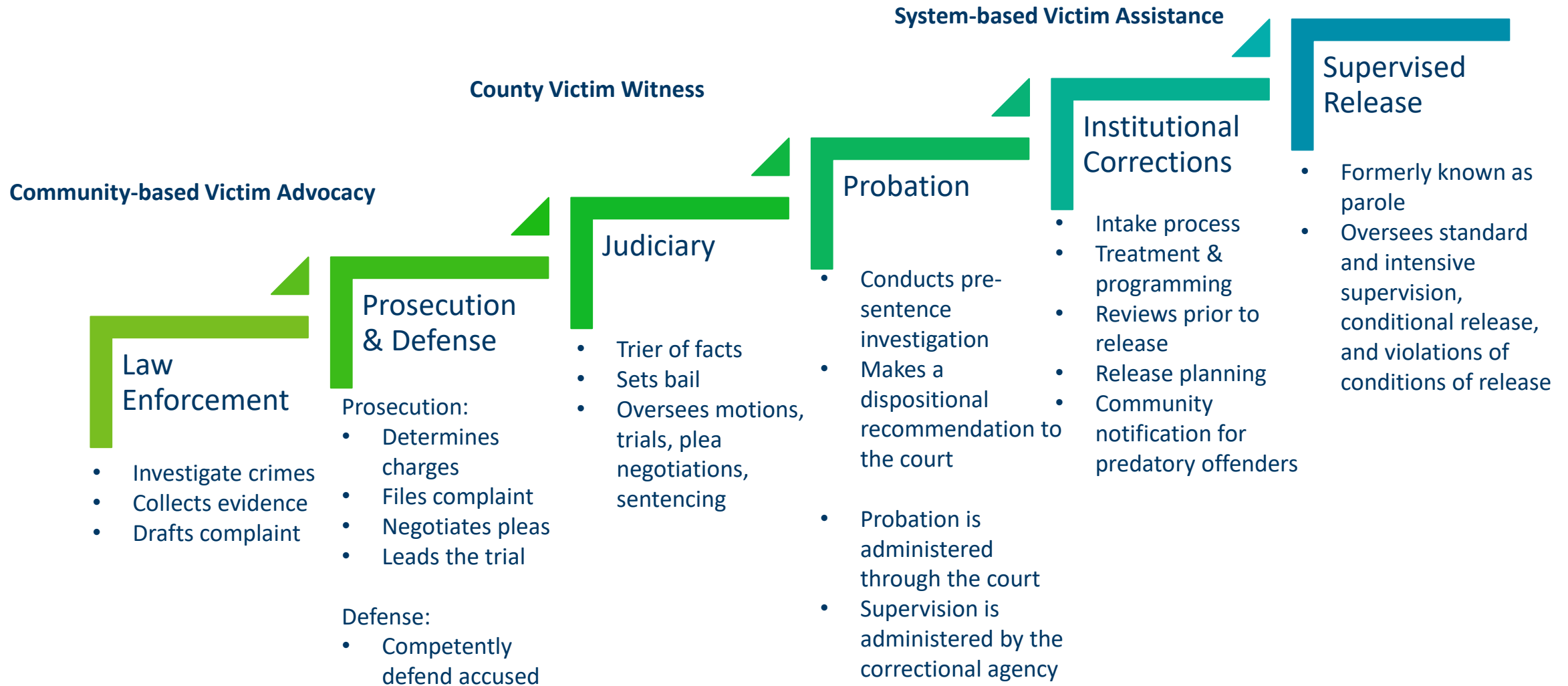
Level 5 Oak Park Heights (301)

A Sample of DOC Crime Types

Crime type (sample)	Total number of current sentences (13514)	% of all current sentences
Homicide	2073	15.3%
Criminal Sexual Conduct	2120	15.7%
Assault – Domestic	771	5.7%
Assault	1341	10%
Robbery	512	4%
Harassment/Stalking	77	0.5%
Weapons	1271	9.4%
Drugs	2021	15%

Services are provided to all victims/survivors of those under DOC jurisdiction, no matter the type of crime.

Criminal Justice System Continuum



Working with Victim-Survivors During Incarceration

What are the unique barriers for this population?

What are some ways advocacy can offer support?

Advocacy: In the Community

- Empowerment Model
- Development of Coping Strategies
- Emotional Support
- Safety Planning
- Resource Referral

Advocacy: While Incarcerated

- Empowerment Model
- Development of Coping Strategies
- Emotional Support
- Safety Planning
- Resource Referral



Empowerment Model

- Primary challenge for advocacy: *How do we give power and control back to our clients who have inherently lost power and control over their environment?*
- Shift focus to: *What do I still have power and control over?*
 - How I respond to my situation
 - How I process my feelings and emotions
 - The choices that I make

Development of Coping Strategies

- Previous coping strategies may be why they are justice involved
- Common coping strategies may not be “prison friendly”
- Consideration for coping strategies being obvious
 - May open them up to abuse/harassment by peers
- Ensure you have an understanding of their facility when making recommendations
- Utilize coping strategies that can be done within themselves with minimal supplies

Emotional Support

- Develop a clear communication strategy
 - How and when can they connect with you?
 - Are you comfortable giving your direct line?
- Consider scheduling check-ins around anniversary dates, following transitions, or during certain times of the year
- Set clear boundaries and expectations

Safety Planning

- Is the victim-survivor currently safe from their abuser?
 - If yes, do they have concerns about their friends and family on the outside being harmed?
 - If no, what options are available within their facility? Do they feel comfortable disclosing to facility staff?
- Is the victim-survivor feeling safe in their current environment?
- As they are preparing for release, how can they incorporate their safety plan into their release plan?

Resource Referral

- Resources may be sent into facility via mail
 - MN DOC has a “Special Mail” option for programs that are PREA approved. Most facilities have something similar, but you may need prior approval. Otherwise, be aware of confidentiality restrictions.
- Consider pivoting to use of trauma workbooks or self-help books during an incarceration in lieu of regular meetings with advocacy.
- Related to release planning, importance of continued support and positive connections within the community to assist in addressing healthy choices, relapse, life stressors, job security, etc.

Working with Individuals Who Have Caused Harm

How do we define a victim?

Why should advocacy work with individuals who have caused harm?

What are some considerations for programs doing this work?

Conflict of Interest


- Nothing within this discussion is intended to override conflict of interest
- What is a conflict of interest?
 - How does your organization define a conflict of interest?
- What alternatives are available in your area if a conflict does exist?
 - Could resources/referrals still be provided to the individual?
- Is it an automatic conflict if the person requesting services has committed a person crime?

Myth of the Perfect Victim

- Doesn't fit Perfect Victim Myth

- Concerning Behavior

- Frequent Caller
- Male Victim
- Violates Boundaries
- History of sexually violating staff
- Corrections believes they report for special privileges
- Mental illness

A profile view of a woman's head and shoulders. The image is overlaid with semi-transparent red and blue colors. The red overlay is on the right side of her head, and the blue overlay is on the left side. Her eyes are closed, and her hair is dark and styled in a bun.

Advocate and Survivor

Cycle of Violence

- Incarcerated individuals may only see themselves as a harm-doer
 - Family, friends, corrections staff, society, etc. may perpetuate this belief
- As with gender-based violence, many people who commit sexual crimes have been abused or mistreated in childhood or witness abuse of others.
 - May identify coercion as a normal way of proceeding
- Dynamics of incarceration act as triggers, leading to trauma reactions
 - Restraints, invasive searches, chaos, violence, etc.
- Incarcerated person may feel stuck in the cycle and see causing harm as only way to survive

Breaking the Cycle

- In the Preamble to the PREA Standards, DOJ recognized that incarcerated individuals who receive proper support services will “enhance their ability to re-integrate into the community and maintain stable employment upon their release from prison.”
- Advocacy support helps to:
 - Deal with current or past trauma
 - Decrease behavioral problems/mental health issues
 - Improve re-entry success
- This all leads to safer communities!

Release Planning

- Prior to incarcerated person's release, discuss ongoing services available in the community
- Create a follow-up plan if program will continue working with them
- Consider what support program will offer if the individual violates their supervision or commits a new crime.
 - Be clear about boundaries and limitations of advocacy.
 - Set expectations for what may exclude them from receiving services.

In Conclusion...

What are some key take aways from today?

Key takeaways



No matter what
crime a person
may have
committed,
rape is not part
of the penalty.

JUST DETENTION 
INTERNATIONAL
RAPE IS NOT PART OF THE PENALTY

Key takeaways

Advocacy support is needed throughout an individual's incarceration and supervision period

- Regular check-ins
- Especially at 30, 60, 90, and a year
- Anniversary dates
- If you are aware of a transition within the system (supervision, facility transfers, treatment, etc.)

Advocacy is a key component in combatting the cycle of violence. The incarcerated population needs help and support, just as our community-based clients do.

You can do this!



Key takeaways



- Creative solutions – think outside the box, flexible, brave
- Reach out if:
 - You need a liaison with the facility – utilize VSRJ staff to assist in access and connecting you with the correct person.
 - You or the victim/survivor has questions
 - DOC doesn't know what we don't know in terms of supporting a particular individual, we want to collaborate and develop relationships and services that meet the complex needs of victim survivors who experience incarceration
- Know that we may contact you to:
 - Provide services to a justice involved individual needing support and resources



QUESTIONS?



Thank you!

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