Successfully Investigating Acquaintance Sexual Assault:
A National Training Manual for Law Enforcement

The National Center for Women and Policing
http://www.womenandpolicing.org/

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Victim Impact

Summary
Instructor: Rape crisis advocate
Time Required: 3 hours with three 10-minute breaks

When delivering this module to patrol officers, the instructor has the option of cutting the tasks and subtasks indicated with an asterisk (*). The first exercise can also be reduced by 20 minutes so the total training time is 2 hours.

Resources material: Overhead Projector
Victim Impact Handout
Self-Test Handout

Task 1
Recognize common reactions and experiences of women raped by someone they know.

Presentation: Video and discussion (Option A)
or

Presentation by survivor (Option B)
Time: 60 minutes
Materials: Video Impact Handout

Option A:
Show excerpts from the video "Rape By Any Name." This film depicts the reactions of several women to rape victimization by a nonstranger. Briefly describe the film to participants and ask them to think about the various reactions and experiences before, during, and after the assault. After the video is completed, provide the Victim Impact Handout to participants and ask them to take a few minutes to jot down any reactions that they recall the victims describing before, during and after the assault. Give participants a few minutes to write their responses, and then ask for ideas for each category.

First, ask participants to describe the reactions of participants to any significant behavior of the perpetrator before the assault. Ask for volunteers to report one of their responses that has not already been mentioned by the group. Generate responses until the group appears to have exhausted their list, and then move on to the victim reactions described during and after the assault. Finally, allow a few minutes for open-ended discussion.

The point should be made that while there are many common experiences among those victimized by rape, there is also diversity in their reactions. Ultimately, no two victims will ever respond identically to rape. Police must therefore be cognizant of victim reactions that are common, but they must also maintain flexibility to handle whatever demeanor is presented.

Option B:
Have a survivor come in to tell her story of rape victimization by a nonstranger. Of course, this should only be done if the survivor can communicate clearly and powerfully with law enforcement audiences. The survivor should be advised to describe basic events of the assault (before,
during, and after) and then talk about the impact of this event on their lives. After the survivor has completed telling her story, the advocate can then talk about how these experiences are common among those victimized by rape.

The point should be made that while there are many common experiences among those victimized by rape, there is also diversity in their reactions. Ultimately, no two victims will ever respond identically to rape. Police must therefore be cognizant of victim reactions that are common, but they must also maintain flexibility to handle whatever demeanor is presented.

**Task 2**

Discuss the general stages and common experiences in response to sexual assault victimization.

**Presentation:** Brief introduction  
**Time:** 10 minutes

**Subtask 2.1**

Describe common experiences of victims during a sexual assault (e.g., frozen fright, dissociation).

**Presentation:** Brief lecture  
**Time:** 10 minutes

**Subtask 2.2**

Generate strategies for interviewing victims who experience frozen fright or dissociation during their assault.

**Presentation:** Brainstorming activity  
**Time:** 10 minutes

Ask participants to take a moment and write down one thing they would say to victims who describe experiencing frozen fright or dissociation during their assault. Ask them to title this, "One thing to say to victims with frozen fright or dissociation." Advise participants to leave room on their paper for ideas from others.

Second, ask participants to generate at least one idea for an investigative strategy to use with these victims. For example, there might be a specific question to ask victims or suspects in these cases, specific evidence to collect, etc. Ask participants to title this, "Investigative strategies for these victims." Again, advise them to leave room on the page for ideas from others.

After participants have generated their ideas, call on a few volunteers to have them share what they would say to these victims. Then, call on participants to report ideas for investigative strategy.

**Subtask 2.3**

Describe common experiences of victims during the acute phase of trauma.

**Presentation:** Brief lecture  
**Time:** 10 minutes
Subtask 2.4
Discuss how these experiences of victims in the acute phase of trauma will affect the police investigation.

Presentation: Group discussion
Time: 15 minutes

Assign participants to groups of 4 to 6. Ask them to discuss in their group how common victim reactions during the acute phase of trauma will affect the police investigation. Also ask them to generate ideas for how police should effectively respond to these issues. Inform groups that they will be given 10 minutes to generate these ideas. After 10 minutes are up, pair each group with another and ask them to share ideas for 5 minutes. Group pairs will not report to the entire class.

Subtask 2.5*
Discuss common experiences of victims during the outward adjustment phase.

Presentation: Brief lecture
Time: 10 minutes

Subtask 2.6*
Discuss common experiences of victims during the integration stage.

Presentation: Brief lecture
Time: 10 minutes

Subtask 2.7
Recognize how the response to sexual assault will be experienced differently by various types of victims.

Presentation: Self-test
Time: 15 minutes

Provide participants with the self-test on special issues with victim response. Tell them to take the test, but assure them that no one will see their responses. When participants have completed the test, go over the correct answers. Allow time for discussion.

Victim Impact Handout
Now that you have seen the video on victim impact, please take a moment to describe the reactions and experiences of these women before, during, and after the assault.

Before the Assault
(reactions to the pre-assault behaviors and warning signs of the perpetrator)

During the Assault
(reactions of the victim during the assault)

After the Assault
(reactions of the victim both in the immediate and long-term aftermath of the assault)
Self-Test: Special Issues with Victim Response

1. Men who are raped experience many of the same symptoms and stages as do women.
   • True
   • False

2. Men who are raped often experience serious confusion over their gender identity (i.e., masculinity) and sexual orientation.
   • True
   • False

3. Some male victims respond to rape victimization by aggressively asserting their masculinity and heterosexuality.
   • True
   • False

4. Some male victims suffer from impotence and sexual anxiety following a rape.
   • True
   • False

5. Rape victims who are severely beaten generally experience worse mental trauma than those assaulted with less physical violence.
   • True
   • False

6. Victims who are raped by a stranger generally experience worse mental trauma than those attacked by someone they know.
   • True
   • False

7. Victims assaulted by an acquaintance often experience more extreme guilt, shame, and difficulties trusting others-in comparison with those raped by a stranger.
   • True
   • False

8. Marital rape can occur with or without battering.
   • True
   • False

9. Being raped a second time is typically less traumatic than the first time.
   • True
   • False
10. Victims who have been raped more than once sometimes describe details from the previous assault when reporting a subsequent assault.
   - True
   - False

11. Victims who have gaps in the memory of their assault (because of drug use, for example) usually experience less mental trauma than those who have more accurate recall.
   - True
   - False

Self-Test: Special Issues with Victim Response (Answers)
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   - True
   - False

2. Men who are raped often experience serious confusion over their gender identity (i.e., masculinity) and sexual orientation.
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