

Section 5: Strategies for Applying the Victim-Centered Approach

Time Allotment: 3 Hours, 25 Minutes



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<p>TOPIC: GETTING STARTED (15 MINUTES)</p> <p>LEARNING OBJECTIVE (1 minute)</p> <p>At the conclusion of this section, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and implement strategies to identify and reach out to sexual assault victim advocacy organizations. <p>INTRODUCTION (4 minutes)</p> <p>Each community has its own unique combination of resources and personalities, its own history, its own strengths and limitations. In this final section, we are going to talk about what it might mean to you in your own community to either begin to implement a victim-centered approach, or to consider ways to improve on the victim-centered strategies you are already employing.</p> <p>Remember that the victim-centered approach involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadening our lens in order to include the victim as a stakeholder; Incorporating victim advocates into our work in our communities; Seeking and incorporating victim input into our supervision decisions; and Asking the question: “What would be in the best interests of the victim in this situation?” <p>As we discussed earlier when we were talking about working with victim advocates, there are at least two perspectives from which to consider these possibilities. One is as an individual supervision officer: What (else) can <i>I</i> do in <i>my</i> practice as a supervisor of sex offenders to broaden my lens; to work with advocates; to seek and incorporate victim input; and to ask the question, what would be best for the victim?</p> <p>The other is from a policy perspective: What (else) can <i>we</i> put in place <i>as a unit, as an agency, or as a management team</i> to systematically broaden our lens; to work with advocates; to seek and</p>	<p>>Use Slide #1 Title Slide: Strategies for Applying the Victim-Centered Approach</p> <p>>Use Slide #2 Learning Objective</p> <p>>Use Slide #3 The Victim-Centered Approach</p>

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incorporate victim input; and to ask the question, “What would be best for the victim?”

Whether we are talking about the individual perspective or the policy perspective, the place we need to start is with the development of relationships based on trust.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

(10 minutes)

We talked in the previous section about the different organizations and agencies where we might find sexual assault victim advocates. We also began the process of filling out a worksheet that charts the victim services available in our respective communities. I am assuming that most of you have some blanks in your chart; let’s talk about some of the steps you can take to fill in that information.

? *What are some of the steps you plan to take to complete your victim services chart?*

All of the steps mentioned are good ways to start gathering this information. These are also good methods for keeping your chart updated as changes occur in your community. To summarize then, steps that you can take to complete or update your victim services chart include:

1. Talking to a victim advocate that you already know who can provide information about other victim services in your area.
2. Talking to other officers in your agency to see who and what they know about victim services in general, and sexual assault victim services in particular.
3. Check the Internet for different agencies in your locality (e.g., DA’s office, rape crisis center, victim advisory councils, etc.).
4. Looking up local victim services in the phone book or on line (helpful resources can be found at <http://ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices/>.)
5. Contacting a national resource such as the National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project, at <http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/index.html>.

Once you have begun to identify some of the victim advocacy resources in your community, the second and most important step is to make personal contact. Call the agency or individual and set up an appointment. Use the chart as a starting place – explain that you are trying to collect information about victim services so that you can provide referrals to the victims you have contact with, and so that you know who to call for assistance in working on a particular case or issue. The meeting may provide an opportunity for you to explain more about your role in sex offender management, or you may

>Use Slide #3

Completing Your Victim Services Chart



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choose to limit it to your own information gathering and leave the door open for another meeting where you are able to share more information.

Even if you decide not to take the relationship any further, you will have made an important contact with someone who can assist you as you work with offenders and their victims. You may have found someone that you can call for advice or input on a particular case you are having difficulty with, or someone to whom you feel comfortable making referrals. (Remember that victim advocates may be restricted in the kind of information they can share with you about a particular victim or case, but they should be able to discuss issues on a general level.)

It is also important to acknowledge that in the course of making these contacts with victim advocates and their agencies, you may encounter some difficult questions or concerns posed by the advocates or agencies, and that these situations will require further consideration, concerted efforts at collaboration, and discussion to determine if and how these contacts can be included in collaborative efforts.

? What if you already have good, established relationships with either individual advocates or with advocacy agencies?

Some of you have already done the critical work of establishing good working relationships with advocates and advocacy agencies in your area. Once these relationships are established, the next step might be to facilitate interaction between your colleagues or agency and the victim advocate(s) and their agencies. If you are in a position to do so, you might want to discuss the possibility of implementing an in-service cross training to allow the advocates to find out more about your work in sex offender management, and your agency to find out more about the victim advocacy options in your community. If this is something that goes beyond your level of authority, you can request that your supervisors pursue it, or you can conduct a more informal exchange. Consider a lunch meeting with the other officers in your unit and a couple of representatives from the advocacy agency. Again, even if the relationship goes no further than this level of information sharing, you will have taken some important steps in providing better service to victims and potential victims in the community. The goal of this is to build an alliance and foster trust based on the fact that you are genuinely concerned about the well-being of victims, and that you believe victim advocates are important contributors to your part of the work in preventing convicted offenders from reoffending.

The advocates in your community may not have considered you an ally before, but once they see that you provide a service that is in the best interest of their constituents, and that you are genuinely interested in their work with victims, they will be eager to work with



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<p>you.</p> <p>If your agency is interested in pursuing a victim-centered approach on a more formal level, these contacts and information-gathering steps will prove to be important. Once you know who the advocates are in your community, and what they each contribute, and even some of the personalities and politics, you are in a better position to negotiate with them about how they can best be involved with your sex offender management strategy. Remember that different kinds of advocates bring different strengths to the work, and it is important to take advantage of all the benefits these different kinds of advocacy can offer.</p> <p>The next step in establishing a more formal approach to victim-centered sex offender management might be to invite the director(s) of the victim advocacy agencies or offices to meet with the supervisors of the sex offender unit, or the supervisor at whatever level would be most appropriate to your agency, to discuss options, strategies, and resources. These steps will obviously depend on the kinds of structures already in place for managing sex offenders in your community.</p>	<p><i>Note: Information about technical assistance and additional resources can be found at www.csom.org.</i></p>



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<p>TOPIC: DERIVING THE BENEFITS (60 MINUTES)</p> <p>LEARNING ACTIVITY: DERIVING THE BENEFITS (60 minutes)</p> <p>Early on in the training, we talked about some of the benefits that might be derived from identifying and working with the common ground between ourselves and both victims and victim advocates.</p> <p>Does anyone recall what some of those potential benefits were, either for us or for victims and victim advocates? Or maybe you've thought of others during the course of the training? (Write these on a flip chart, or refer to the slides.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Break the group into as many benefits as you have listed, and ask each group to select a recorder and reporter. Assign one benefit to each group.2. Ask the group to identify strategies for achieving that particular benefit. Encourage them to be as specific as they possibly can. For example, if the benefit is "more information about an offender's cycle of offending," how would they get that information? At what stage of supervision? In what format? Written? Verbal? Is it a one time information gathering effort or would it continue over time?3. Ask the group to then identify challenges or obstacles they might face in trying to implement any of the strategies they've identified, again, being as specific as possible. If one of the strategies is to send a letter to victims inviting them to call with information about the offender, challenges might include locating victims, or victims being uncomfortable responding to an unfamiliar contact person or agency.4. Next, ask them to select one of the challenges or obstacles and identify possible (specific) strategies to overcome that challenge or obstacle. For example, victims might be more willing to respond if the letter came from a victim advocate. <p>Processing the Exercise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask each group to report one strategy to achieve the benefit, one obstacle or challenge, and one strategy to overcome the obstacle. Record these on a flip chart.2. Ask if anyone notices anything about the information that has been recorded. (Do the challenges or proposed strategies have anything in common? Do any of the strategies or solutions appear more than once?)3. Ask if any group had any particular difficulties – were there any benefits that didn't suggest a strategy? Or obstacles that	<p>Trainer Notes</p> <p><i>NOTE: If audience members don't recall the list from the beginning of the training, you can use the slide from Section 1 to prompt them.</i></p> <p>OPTIONAL SLIDE >Use Slide #4 How Do We Benefit?</p> <p><i>NOTE: If you find a suggested strategy is not particularly appropriate (for example, if a group suggests polygraphing victims to find out what they know), it will be important to comment on why it is inappropriate. Do not let stand strategies that reinforce victim-blaming attitudes, myths about victims, or strategies that treat</i></p>



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<p>LEARNING ACTIVITY: CREATING AN ACTION PLAN (75 minutes)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Invite participants to look at the Action Planning handout. Invite them to work together on this, especially if they are at the training with colleagues from the same office or jurisdiction.2. Describe the task: Name five things that they do in their work managing sex offenders. Consider how victims or victim advocates could be more involved in those activities – what kind of choices or information could victims be offered? What kind of options exist for participation or access? Who needs to be involved in order to make these changes happen, and what their involvement would need to be; for example, do they need approval from a supervisor or agency head? Do they need a particular individual’s participation in meetings? Again, encourage participants to consider both individual and policy level changes. Finally, list three actions that they could take to move toward this change.3. Give as much time as possible to write down ideas, and encourage the participants to complete the action plan with their colleagues.4. Ask if anyone has an idea that came to them that they would like to share and add it to the flip chart list.	<p><i>strategies.</i></p> <p>📖 Refer to Handout Action Planning</p> <p><i>NOTE: You can use an example from the list on the flip chart to go through a sample for the action plan. If you have several participants from the same jurisdiction, encourage them to work together on action planning. If everyone is from the same community, you might want to have people work in groups that are mixed by role or position. If you have a particularly large group, you may want to consider breaking participants into smaller groups and assigning a leader to report out about their group’s work.</i></p>

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TOPIC: CONCLUSION

(30 MINUTES)

REVIEW

(15 minutes)

We've covered a lot of information during the course of this training, including information about the impact of sexual assault on victims and those closest to them, the various types of victim advocates in your communities and the unique support they can offer, and some of the critical issues to consider as you begin to work more closely with victims and victim advocates. All of this information is valuable and can help you build effective partnerships with victims and victim advocates in your community to enhance the effective supervision of sex offenders. Before we close, let's take a few minutes to review some of the key points of this training.

- ? *What is a victim-centered approach?*
- ? *What is the value of a victim-centered approach?*
- ? *Who are victim advocates and what do they do?*
- ? *Who are the victims of sexual assault? What are some of the things we know about them?*
- ? *What is a typical response to sexual assault?*
- ? *What are some things that will influence someone's response to being sexually assaulted?*
- ? *What are victims' needs in terms of their involvement with us or with the criminal justice system in general?*

CLOSING

(15 minutes)

We hope that this training has given you some new information to consider in your work managing sex offenders, as well as some strategies for thinking about how to apply this information to the practices in your community, to the extent that you believe it would be helpful and appropriate. We encourage you to complete your victim services inventory and your action plan, and, if you do not already have relationships with the advocates in your community, to take the first steps in building those relationships. If there are challenges or obstacles that you face in trying to do more to involve victims or victim advocates, we hope that you are leaving with some new ideas about how to overcome them. Given our discussions

NOTE: As an alternative to this type of "quiz," you can invite participants to share one new thing that they learned or one point that they will be taking away from the training.

NOTE: The "typical response" question is kind of a trick question – there is none, but someone may point to the different theories like Rape Trauma Syndrome or Child Abuse Accommodation Theory. Make the distinction between the way the theories describe a possible range or pattern of response and a typical response. If you are not comfortable with this kind of question, you are free to skip it.

NOTE: Encourage participants to fill out written evaluations. You can also invite participants to respond verbally to what they liked about the training and what they would have liked to have done differently. Write their responses on a flip chart as a way of acknowledging their comments.



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today, we are now all in a position where we can ask ourselves and/or those we work with, “How will what we are doing, or how will the decision we just made, impact a victim?”	