



Sexual Assault

DEMONSTRATION INITIATIVE

Enhancing Sexual Assault Services

Building Comprehensive Sexual Assault Services Programs

Sexual assault service programs are organizations that provide advocacy and support to sexual violence survivors and work towards the elimination of sexual violence. Some are single-purpose agencies, while others are merged with domestic violence or other social services. These dual/multi-service agencies provide a wide array of services for a variety of concerns and needs. Sexual assault service programs provide a range of services, from the basic collection of services that define us as advocacy organizations for sexual violence survivors to a broad and diverse offering of intervention, prevention, and systems change programming. These services can be conceptualized in two categories: *core services* that meet basic needs and *comprehensive services* that provide additional opportunities for healing and empowerment. All services available to survivors of sexual assault should be rooted in an understanding of the complex effects that trauma and other forms of oppression may have in a survivor's life.



Core services are the basic services sexual assault service agencies provide to sexual violence survivors and the community. They are the essential services that meet the immediate needs of survivors. In many states and territories, coalitions or state agencies define these core services by setting minimum standards of practice: the types of services that must be offered and the way services must be provided. (RSP, 2011). These often include services such as 24-hour crisis intervention, hospital and legal accompaniment, and information and referrals for other needs.

Comprehensive services provide the core services as well as additional opportunities for survivors to heal and communities to prevent violence. These include additional services that address the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of sexual assault survivors and their allies. These services go beyond the most immediate, pressing needs to support more in-depth healing, empowerment and integration. This guide is intended to describe the broad range of services that advocacy agencies may provide, but is not exhaustive. Different cultural expressions of trauma may require culturally-congruent responses. Services made available to survivors of sexual assault should be representative of each community's needs.

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Approaches to Services

Sexual assault service programs should provide services in a manner that demonstrates integrity, ethics, respect for diversity, and survivor autonomy and empowerment. These approaches to service provision incorporate the following characteristics:

Rooted in Anti-Oppression & Empowerment-Based Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Programs are mindful of the intersections of all forms of oppression and how this affects survivors' experiences▪ Programs are responsive to the multidimensional needs of survivors▪ Programs support and empower survivors employed at their own agencies
Services Made Available Across the Lifespan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Services are available to survivors across the lifespan (infants, children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and later in life adults)▪ Programs are responsive to all stages of the healing journey, regardless of when the assault and disclosure take place
Accessible Accommodations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Services are available to survivors of all levels of ability▪ Accommodations are made for survivors according to each person's self-identified needs▪ Services are available free of cost▪ Services and materials are available in the preferred language of the survivor▪ Materials are written at a sixth grade reading level or below
Culturally-Specific Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Services are :<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Representative of the community's identified needs○ Available and relevant to all genders○ Available and relevant to people of all sexual orientations○ Linguistically specific○ Aware of the complicating impact of historical and intergenerational trauma○ Made available in locations that are relevant to the community
Present in a Wide-Range of Settings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Services are made available in community settings, and to survivors that reside both in-shelter and outside of shelter▪ Programs provide advocacy and other services in a wide range of settings, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Community institutions○ Faith communities○ Social service settings○ Medical settings○ Legal/Criminal justice settings

- Community service groups
- Neighborhood groups

Rooted in Trauma-Informed Care Principles

- Programs and services are rooted in understanding of the effects of trauma on the lives of survivors and those who serve them
- Programs support survivor growth and autonomy through collaboration and survivor-led decision-making
- Programs are mindful of organizational capacity and limitations, with program culture, staffing, and services reflective of such awareness
- Programs actively work to build vicarious resilience and prevent and lessen vicarious trauma

Types of Services

	Core Services	Comprehensive Services
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community awareness-raising efforts ▪ Awareness presentations to local organizations, businesses, and school communities on sexual violence and sexual violence related issues ▪ Integration of at least some skill-building for prevention into awareness presentations 	Core services plus... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The promotion of social equity and justice through seeking diverse perspectives and valuing diverse experiences ▪ Skill-building for prevention as a major focus of curricula ▪ Social norms campaigns that promote healthy, respectful, non-violent behaviors and relationships ▪ Prevention initiatives that involve community leaders to address root causes of sexual violence ▪ Ongoing evaluation of intervention outcomes
Crisis Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available 24 hours a day/7 days a week ▪ Active listening and empathy ▪ Reinforcement of coping skills 	Core services plus... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistency in crisis intervention for survivors who frequently access support ▪ Face-to-face options available for support on an ongoing basis (distinct from professional therapy) ▪ Staff and volunteers trained in and use techniques to help reduce trauma

		<p>symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing evaluation of crisis intervention delivery
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education about medical options ▪ Medical accompaniment and advocacy during forensic exam or other emergency care ▪ Education about justice and safety options ▪ Legal accompaniment and advocacy during reporting and through prosecution ▪ Legal accompaniment and advocacy provided for securing orders of protection ▪ Advocacy as requested by survivor for other basic needs 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medical accompaniment and advocacy provided for non-emergency medical services (e.g., OB/GYN care, dental care, etc.) ▪ Legal accompaniment and advocacy provided for civil law cases ▪ Advocacy provided for other impacts on survivor (e.g., with employers, schools, etc.) ▪ Ongoing evaluation of advocacy needs and delivery
Information and Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referrals to other service providers that can support survivors (e.g., therapists, social services, housing, legal aide, holistic healing services, etc.) 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screening of agencies and service providers on referral list ▪ Policies for maintaining confidentiality when communicating with agencies and service providers ▪ Referrals for a wide range of health care (e.g., OB/GYN, chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, etc.) ▪ Ongoing evaluation of new information and referral needs
Counseling and Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psycho education about effects of trauma ▪ Supportive listening, validation, and empowerment ▪ Assistance with coping skills and trigger plans 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned interventions and goals ▪ Ongoing evaluation of counseling and therapy delivery and outcomes ▪ Use of specific modalities ▪ Provided by trained and/or licensed counselor or therapist

<p>Support Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groups exchange information, share techniques for problem-solving, and explore feelings ▪ May be run by advocates or counselors ▪ Peer-led support groups ▪ May be curriculum-based, open or closed, short-term or ongoing ▪ Culturally-relevant groups/Talking Circles ▪ Sexual violence specific groups 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groups for adult survivors of child sexual abuse ▪ Groups for male survivors ▪ Groups for parents of child survivors ▪ Groups for LGBTQ survivors ▪ Groups for age-specific groups ▪ Groups for survivors with disabilities ▪ Groups in multiple languages (determined by community needs) ▪ Ongoing evaluation of delivery and outcomes
<p>Holistic Healing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healing arts opportunities (e.g., art therapy, music therapy) ▪ Creative arts opportunities (e.g., knitting circles, writing groups, etc.) ▪ Movement and exercise groups and classes ▪ Meditation and mindfulness classes and groups ▪ Yoga ▪ Nutritional education ▪ Somatic (body) based approaches ▪ Outdoor-based healing activities ▪ Culturally-based approaches to healing ▪ Ongoing evaluation of survivor interests and delivery and outcomes of holistic opportunities
<p>Institutional/ Systems Advocacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional training ▪ Community task forces (SARTs, etc.) ▪ Media advocacy 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular review and improvements of protocols and policies ▪ Creation/integration of roles relevant to sexual assault intervention and prevention ▪ Regular communication

		<p>with medical and legal partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular communication with other social services ▪ Ongoing evaluation of systems coordination and community change
Support for Significant Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information and referrals ▪ Crisis intervention 	<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy ▪ Support groups ▪ Counseling/therapy ▪ Child care
Survivor Activism and Involvement		<p>Core services plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survivor participation in program advisory board ▪ Volunteer opportunities ▪ Survivor-led philanthropic events ▪ Survivor political action committees ▪ Opportunities for survivors to speak publicly about their experiences (e.g., Speak Outs, Clothesline Project, art exhibits, publications, speakers' bureau, etc.) ▪ Peer-led groups ▪ Recruitment strategies when hiring to ensure survivors can and are encouraged to apply ▪ Support for and empowerment of staff who are survivors