



Assumption
University

Digital Commons @ Assumption University

Sociology and Criminology Department Faculty
Works

Sociology and Criminology Department

2013

Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty

Alison C. Cares

Assumption College, a.cares@assumption.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/sociology-and-criminology-faculty>



Part of the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cares, Alison C. "Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty." *The National Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims' Issues Into University and College Curricula* (June 2013). <https://www.ovcttac.gov/educators>.

This Position Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology and Criminology Department at Digital Commons @ Assumption University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology and Criminology Department Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Assumption University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@assumption.edu.

**Teaching About Criminal Victimization:
Guidelines for Faculty**

Alison C. Cares, Ph.D., Assumption College

June 2013

1. Faculty Checklist.....page 1

2. Faculty Guidelines.....page 2

3. Referral Resources.....page 11

4. Faculty Self-Assessment.....page 12

These guidelines were produced by the University of Massachusetts Lowell under grant # 2009-VF-GX-K006, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these guidelines are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Acknowledgements

Linda Williams, Principal Investigator, and David Hirschel, Co-Principal Investigator,
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Eve Buzawa, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Maureen Lowell, San Jose State University

Rhoda Trietsch, The Counseling Center, University of Massachusetts Lowell

University of Massachusetts Lowell Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences First Year
Experiences Seminar Faculty

University of Massachusetts Lowell Department of English College Writing Faculty Dan
Esparza

Lisa Bostaph, Boise State University

Mary Frederick, University of Massachusetts Lowell

The Grant's Subrecipient Partners

Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily
represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims' Issues into University and College Curricula.
This project was supported by Grant No. 2006-MU-FX-0060 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

1. Faculty Checklist

Teaching About Victims of Crime and Handling Student Disclosures

Presentation of course material on criminal victimization can be difficult for students, especially those who have been or know victims of crime, and may lead students to disclose personal stories of victimization.

Faculty have the responsibility to:

- Create a classroom environment that is supportive for victims of crime.
- Sensitively and appropriately respond to personal disclosures of victimization.

This checklist highlights important steps for faculty. The accompanying materials provide guidelines, examples, and further resources to support faculty in teaching about victimization.

Setting the Tone: Teach students how to be supportive in discussing victimization.

- Discussion needs to be respectful.
- Discussion needs to be sensitive.
- Discussion needs to avoid victim-blaming.
- Discussion needs to be respect the privacy of others.

Framing Material: When class subject matter may be difficult for victims of crime:

- Warn of potentially difficult subject matter.
- Allow for students to leave if needed, but check in to insure they are OK.
- Remind students of how to engage in self-care and get support.
- Consider alternate strategies/assignments for addressing the subject matter.

Preparing for Disclosures: Structure classes in a way that does not encourage personal disclosures, but can appropriately respond to them if they should occur.

- Set guidelines up front (in the syllabus, in class, & online) about disclosing experiences of criminal victimization.

Responding to Disclosures: Students may see faculty as experts and a safe place to talk about their experiences with victimization. Faculty have the responsibility to:

- Insure safety – is the student in imminent danger?
- Respond sensitively and appropriately.
 - ♦ Knowing what to say and do.
 - ~ Listen without interrupting.
 - ~ Be comfortable with expressions of emotion.
 - ~ Acknowledge their courage in sharing.
 - ♦ Know what not to say and do.
 - ~ Do not ask why or judge their actions.
 - ~ Avoid telling them what to do.
 - ~ Do not minimize what they are experiencing or feeling.
 - ♦ Finding out what they need for the class.
 - ~ How can they be successful in this class, but still supported?
- Refer to appropriate resources.
 - ~ On campus.
 - ~ In the community.
 - ~ Identify trusted and potentially supportive family and friends.
- Follow up if appropriate.

2. Faculty Guidelines

Teaching About Criminal Victimization

Criminal victimization is a far too common experience – which means that many of the students who are in our classes have been victims of crime and experienced physical, financial, or emotional consequences as a result of the commission of a crime or know someone who has. Victimization knows no boundaries – not gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status, race or ethnic identification, religions belief or affiliation, or any other category. While impact of criminal victimization varies widely, it can have very profound lasting negative effects.^{1, 2}

These guidelines are designed to provide support to college and university faculty in teaching about criminal victimization, regardless of the course or discipline the material will be presented in. Faculty do not have to be therapists or experts on criminal victimization to teach responsibly and with sensitivity about victims of crime. In fact, it is not in students' best interests for faculty to try to act as therapists, as that is not their role.

However, faculty do need to take a few simple steps to create a supportive learning environment for students, especially those who have been victims of crime, and faculty have to be prepared to handle disclosures that occur in or outside the classroom, and provide appropriate support and referrals. In fact, faculty sensitivity, course materials, or class discussion may serve as the impetus that leads students to seek needed referrals for help and support. Key to this is to provide students with guidelines and promote a climate of support. Faculty need to know how to avoid contributing to the harm victimization may cause and be aware of simple steps that may make a profound difference for a victim of crime, as the reactions of others to victims of crime are an important predictor of how much that experience will impact the victim.

Faculty can make a significant, positive difference in helping students who are victims of crime integrate their experiences and be successful (see, for example, the experiences of a student recounted in Sebold, 1999). Similarly, the reactions and responses of other students may have a lasting impact as well.

These efforts do not have to be undertaken in isolation. Faculty are encouraged to take advantage of additional resources beyond these guidelines to help prepare to teach about criminal victimization. This may include talking with colleagues with an expertise in teaching classes on criminal victimization or on trauma. These colleagues may be in the same department or on the same campus, or may be engaged in discussion at professional conferences or via listservs. Faculty may also access on and off campus resources, such as the campus counseling center, local victim services agencies, and their State Victim Assistance Academy (SVAA). A list of SVAAAs can be accessed online at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/training/svaa.html#svaalist

¹ For more information on the nature and extent of criminal victimization, see The Nature and Extent of Criminal Victimization curriculum kit available by email vic_ovc@uml.edu.

² For more information on the impact of criminal victimization, see The Impact of Victimization curriculum kit available by email vic_ovc@uml.edu.

Setting the Tone

From the start, faculty need to create a classroom environment that is supportive of victims of crime. This involves being respectful, using care in talking about victims of crime, and specifically addressing some of the concerns and issues of crime victims. This approach may be helpful and supportive not just for students who are victims of crime, but also for students who have suffered other trauma, such as returning veterans of war.

During the first day of the course or the first day that faculty will cover material about criminal victimization, take a few minutes to set the tone. (In an online course, this can be handled via an email or post to students, or as part of a summary of the week ahead.) Talk to students about why it is important to study and talk about criminal victimization, but that it needs to be done in a respectful and non-judgmental way. Faculty can model this in their own speech. An example is using the word “experience” instead of “suffer” victimization and by using examples of both males and females as victims. Also be clear to separate the details of particular cases and the politics of crime and criminal justice from the issues of victims' rights and services. Below are some examples of possible talking points.

Discussion needs to be respectful. Tell students:

- “We all come from different backgrounds and have different experiences, and we all have something important to share to add to the educational experiences of everyone in the class. The point is to learn new things and consider multiple points of view, not seek to convince others our view is the ‘right’ or ‘best’ way.”

Discussion needs to be sensitive. Ask students to:

- Always remember to be sensitive to what others say.
- Remember to think before you say things or react in any way, especially in reaction to some of the personal stories we may learn about.
 - ♦ Saying that something that happened to a victim of crime is gross or disgusting can have a very negative impact.
 - ♦ Saying that a victim must have been permanently harmed or affected by a crime can have a very negative impact.
- Remember that you do not know what those around you have experienced, and because victimization is all too common, there will be people in the room who have been victims of crime or know someone who has been.

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

- Remember that everyone experiences victimization differently. Allow for those differences even though it may be the opposite of what you think, what may have happened to you, or what you may have done or thought about the situation.

Discussion and lecture need to avoid victim-blaming. Model this behavior and ask students to:

- Be careful not to play the blame game, which is not productive. We are not here to make victims of crime feel worse about what happened to them, but to learn more about what the issues they face are.
- Questions about the victim's behavior preceding the crime can help understand the dynamics of crime. However victim blaming (Why were they there at that time of night? Were they drinking? What were they wearing? Why were they carrying so much cash with them?) could have a negative impact on a victim. Talking about prevention (how to reduce risk) is important, but that is not the same as blaming (implying a victim is responsible for what happened to them because of their choices). Leave the blame where it belongs – with the person who chose to commit a crime.

Discussion needs to be respect the privacy of others. Model this behavior:

- Tell students that if and when a fellow classmate shares a story of victimization (their own or another's), that should stay in the classroom unless you are told otherwise.
- At the beginning of the course, ask students to agree that if they talk about the class and what took place in it, they will talk only about their experience or participation.
- Faculty may say something like, "Thank you for sharing with the class. I know everyone here appreciates it and recognizes the courage it took you to do that. We will keep this information confidential so you can continue to decide when you want to share your story with others."

Framing Material Regarding Victims of Crime

When class materials, be it a video, guest speaker, activity, reading, assignment, or lecture, include subject matter that may be difficult for victims of crime, it is important to preface them with a disclaimer of sorts. The recommended best practice is to do this the class before the material will be included, so students have sufficient time to consider their options, followed up by a reminder at the start of the class including the material.

Warn of potentially difficult subject matter.

- For example "The film today includes a victim of sexual assault talking in detail about her assault and her life since. Many people find this material difficult."

Allow for students to leave if needed.

- Announce that students who find the material difficult are free to quietly leave, but that the

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

professor reserves the right to follow up to check on them. Also add that if someone leaves the room, that should not be taken as evidence that they have been a crime victim or know someone who has been a victim of crime.

Remind students of how to engage in self-care and get support.

- Remind students that if they do find the subject matter difficult either right away or at a later date, there are resources available on campus, in the community, and online to help them (a listing of national resources is included in Part 3 of these guidelines).
- For potentially difficult readings or other outside of class materials, suggest reading them in private or with a trusted family member or close friend present, not in public.
- For in class, students can “zone out.”

Consider offering alternate strategies and/or assignments for addressing the subject matter.

- For videos, if a student approaches faculty with concerns, discuss with the student the opportunity to view the video outside of class. This may mean having them view the video on their own time in a more private setting, such as a faculty member’s office. As a part of this, discuss with the student that viewing in class can give the opportunity to hear what others have to say about the video, which they will miss viewing it outside of class. If they do view the video outside of class, faculty should make sure the student has been given appropriate support resources and will talk to the faculty after viewing the video.
- For guest speakers, video or audiotape them (with their permission) and make that available in an alternate setting to students.

Preparing for Disclosures

Teaching about criminal victimization often produces personal disclosures of victimization experiences from students. These disclosures may occur in the classroom, online, or on an assignment. It is important to structure classes that deal with subject matter on criminal victimization in a way that does not encourage personal disclosures, but can appropriately manage them if they should occur. This is important not only for the victim, but also because disclosures may be distressing for other students.

While it can be important for victims to talk about their experiences and they should not be afraid to talk about them, the classroom (or in an online class environment) typically is not an appropriate environment for such disclosures. Disclosures in the classroom is of particular concern because of the non-confidential nature of the setting, where faculty cannot guarantee that other students will be judicious in their sharing of material, and because faculty cannot be certain that the reactions of other students to disclosures will be appropriate.

Victimization disclosures from students should not be actively sought or encouraged by faculty or class assignments, but they may still happen. Faculty need to be prepared to respond to disclosures in an appropriate and supportive manner, including providing referrals to resources

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

and insuring the immediate safety and stability of the student. Faculty should not act as therapists (even if trained as a therapist). That would be inappropriate in this situation.

In order to guard against a troubled student making accusations of impropriety against a faculty member, faculty should be cautious about being in a room alone with a student without a colleague or another witness present.

Set guidelines up front about disclosing experiences of criminal victimization in class.

Include statements on the syllabus and on a course Web page. Some examples:

- “Due to the difficult nature of the material addressed in class, you may experience a need or desire to process some of your own personal experiences with violence and victimization. This is a completely normal and reasonable response given the subject matter. While the classroom is not the appropriate venue for this processing to take place, I am available outside of the classroom to offer support and provide referrals as necessary. For your reference, here are a few resources you may wish to utilize.”
- “Warning: The material covered in class is not hypothetical and reflects experiences shared by many individuals including individuals enrolled in the course. It is not unusual for students to have experienced some of the abuses discussed. These personal associations may bring up strong feelings for students. If you feel the material is bringing up issues for you that are affecting your ability to be successful in the course, please *take advantage of the University counseling center and/or see the instructor.*”

On the first day of class or first day of material on crime victims, make an announcement such as:

- “I understand that unfortunately victimization is all too common, so many of you may have had personal experiences. This can be very difficult. While it is totally understandable that you may have reactions to the subject matter of the course, class is not an appropriate place to try and discuss or process those feelings. I am available outside of class to provide support and referrals to appropriate resources. There are also resources listed in the syllabus and on the course website for you to consider using.”

If the contents of an assignment are going to be shared with the class, either in a physical class or in an online environment, make sure students know that at the outset of the assignment. In addition, assignments should be structured in ways that would not encourage disclosure of victimization. Disclosures of victimization should not be encouraged or required as a part of a course or assignment.

Remind students that although they may know relevant experiences to share that others have had, that type of information (disclosing the victimization of others) should only be shared in a way that keeps the victim anonymous, if at all.

Responding to student disclosures, be aware:

Students may see faculty, especially those teaching about criminal victimization, as experts and as a safe place to talk about their experiences with victimization. Faculty may (or may not) be experts on victimization in an academic sense, but it is not their role to be counselors for students. Instead, faculty have the responsibility to:

- Insure safety.
- Respond sensitively and appropriately.
- Refer to appropriate resources.
- Follow up if appropriate.

Insuring safety.

When a student discloses victimization, regardless of how long ago what was disclosed occurred, insure that the student is in no immediate danger. Some possible questions to use are below.

- Are you in any danger now?
- Do you have a safe place to go after we finish talking?
- Are you afraid to go home or back to where you live?

Responding sensitively and appropriately: Knowing what to do and say.

When a student discloses a victimization, they are expecting it to be a safe space, where they will not be judged and people will want to help and support them. Listen to their story without interrupting, maintain eye contact, and smile or nod encouragingly as needed. This may mean having to be comfortable with crying (having tissues available in faculty offices is recommended) and strong expressions of emotion, as well as periods of silence.

Remember faculty are not the police, so their role is to believe the student and reinforce that the student is not to blame for the victimization, not to find out what really happened. If a disclosure happens in class, the faculty's demeanor and body language and what faculty say once the student stops sets the tone for other students to follow. It is similar in an online environment, in that the faculty would hopefully get to be the first to respond to the disclosure, to set the tone for others.

Below are some suggestions for how to initially respond.

- “Thank you for sharing with me (or with us, if in a classroom setting). That took a lot of courage.”

- “I am sorry this happened to you.”
- “I appreciate that you chose to share this with me. What can I do to help?”

Some examples of a follow up to the initial response are below.

- “This was not your fault.”
- “You are not to blame.”

If a disclosure happens on a written assignment or online, faculty should follow up with the student to insure that the student is safe and is aware of available resources for support.

If the disclosure happens in the class, take care in asking any follow on questions. The point is to make sure the student feels heard and supported, not to determine what happened or to fix the problem. Some examples of what to say for follow on are below.

- Student A (student who disclosed) spoke very eloquently about this point. I’d like to expand on what researchers have found related to that. Although each experience is different, what Student A (student who disclosed) shared illustrates that often...

Occasionally a student disclosing in class will go on at length and really be processing inappropriately in class. This can be a difficult situation. Try to tactfully intervene and draw the conversation back to the planned course material. Below is one suggestion for dealing with that situation. Afterwards, or if it happens repeatedly, consult campus counseling services or a local crisis line for professional guidance in handling the situation.

- “Excuse me. I am very sorry to have to ask you to stop, since this is obviously important. Unfortunately there is some material we have to cover today, so I am going to need to move on now. If you have a few minutes after class, I’d love to talk about this more.”

Responding sensitively and appropriately – Knowing what not to do and say

The way people respond to disclosures by victims of crime can help or hurt those victims. Asking a victim of crime questions about their behavior and decisions before, during, and after the victimization can make them feel like what happened was their fault.

Telling a victim of crime what to do, even if based on good intentions, deprives them of control over their life and decisions, which reinforces the lack of control they may feel in the wake of the victimization.

In general, avoid questioning their decisions (e.g., Why didn’t you call the police right away?), blaming them for what happened (e.g., If you had not been dressed like that, he never even would have noticed you.), minimizing what happened or how they are

feeling (e.g., At least all that happened was that they stole some of your stuff – it is not like you were attacked), and telling them what to do (e.g., The first thing you need to do is tell your parents).

To avoid sounding judgmental or not being supportive, below are some examples of phrases to avoid.

- “That’s terrible.”
- “You should...”
- “Why did you...?”
- “You need to...”
- “It could have been worse.”
- “I know how you feel.”
- “If it were me...”

Responding sensitively and appropriately – Find out what they need for the class.

If the subject matter of the course has been difficult for a student, determine what it is that they may need to continue in the course and be successful. This is best handled as a private conversation, perhaps during office hours or by appointment. If necessary, such as in an online course, this may also be done via phone or email. This may require asking questions to determine what is needed. In asking questions, some basic guidelines are provided below.

- What is it that I need to know in order to help this person?
- What type of question (open-ended or closed-ended) will get me the information I need?
- How can I ask this question without having a negative impact on the victim of crime?

Some possibilities are:

- “It sounds like parts of the class are difficult for you. Can you tell me what parts you feel like you have not been able to do?”
- “If there are parts of the class that you are finding difficult, can we talk about other ways we might handle this?”
- “It sounds like watching videos in class has you concerned that you might have a strong reaction. Would it be easier for you to watch them in my office?”

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

Before engaging in this type of conversation, it is important to be familiar with any options the college or university may offer to accommodate students who are victims of crime. There are typically not legal requirements of the college or university, but there may be helpful policies in place that either are specific to students who were victims of crime (or victims of particular types of crime), or for students who are having mental or physical health problems. The Dean of Students and/or Registrar should be familiar with what accommodations are available. Some accommodations for their particular course that a faculty can consider include:

- Alternate viewing of difficult material
- Alternate readings – perhaps more research based than narrative or personal stories (if applicable)
- Alternate assignments
- Arranging for a student to be able to leave class as needed (but take steps so that the student will not then be identified as a victim of crime)
- Incomplete
- Withdrawal

Many students worry that asking for an accommodation will result in a lower grade or the faculty member thinking less of them as a student. Take steps to reassure the student that is not the case. This is especially important if a student is considering withdrawing. Many students will not ask for a withdrawal, even when it might be appropriate. It is sometimes helpful to suggest a withdrawal if deemed needed. For example, “It sounds like you have a lot going on this semester. I am not saying you should withdraw, but if that is an option that you want to consider, please know that I would not think any less of you and I would be happy to see you in another class in a future semester.”

Refer to appropriate resources.

Faculty should be aware of the appropriate professional resources for students who are victims of crime. Included in the supplementary materials with these guidelines is a list of national resources for victims of crime. It's best to use these to develop a short list of local and campus resources that can be used to refer students, as well as including some national resources.

Campus resources to list typically include counseling, health services, college chaplain/faith community, dean of students, women's center, and campus police. It is helpful to have these resources available to share with students who come to the office, as well as available for students to access without talking to faculty, such as including them in the syllabus and online via course and faculty web pages. Recommended best practice is to update the resources list each semester.

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

It is also a good idea to let campus based and relevant local resources know that course material will be covering crime victims' issues and they are being included on a list of referral resources being shared with students.

In developing the list of local and campus resources, faculty will need to do some basic research to "vet" the appropriateness of the organization for use as a referral source. This may include, at a minimum:

- Calling the hotlines to confirm the number is correct and active.
- Calling the business line (or hotline if there is no business line) to get what services are provided and details of services. In this case it is helpful to think :
 - ♦ *Who* is eligible and ineligible for services? Qualifications may be related to age, gender, location of residence or of the victimization, if the victimization was reported to police, immigration status, and more.
 - ♦ *What* services are provided? Are the services confidential? Is there a cost? Are services provided in languages other than English?
 - ♦ *Where* are the services provided? Are those locations accessible by public transportation? Is there access for those who are physically disabled?
 - ♦ *When* are services provided? What services are available 24 hours?
- Screening the organizations' websites and mobile presence (e.g., blogs, twitter, Facebook, YouTube, tumblr, and RSS feeds)
- Conducting an internet search to see if there are warning signs that the organization is not supportive to victims. For example, if there has been news coverage of recent successful lawsuits by victims or the government against the organization, that could be a cause for concern.

Below is some suggested language for providing referrals in person.

- "I am here to listen and support you, but it would also be helpful for you to talk to someone who has specialized knowledge in this area."
- "I appreciate it when students come to me, but because my training is in how to teach and research, I always provide people with the numbers of agencies trained to help, just in case."
- "Although I am a counselor by training, because I am acting as your professor, I cannot also be your therapist so I have a list of resources to refer you to for additional support."
- "We all need help to get through life. I wanted to share some information with you in case you ever need it."
- "If you think it might help, here is a list I give to students with groups that can help."

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

It also can be helpful to students to help them identify people in their life who might also serve as trusted support people. This may include parents/guardians, siblings, other family members, friends, faith community leaders, and co-workers.

Be aware of any state and campus reporting requirements that apply to college and university faculty. Faculty may or may not be considered mandated reporters of child abuse and the abuse of dependent elders in their state.

There also may be campus reporting requirements related to sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and other types of victimization. Typically these reports are easy to fill out and do not require identification of the victim. If you have questions about these policies, a good place to ask about them is Campus Police.

If faculty are bound to report certain information that would identify the student to outsiders, they should disclose those requirements to the student up front so students know what information can be kept confidential and what cannot.

In rare cases, a faculty member may be concerned that a student is an imminent danger to themselves or others. In such a case, call the appropriate campus support systems (typically Dean of Students (to be sure there is a proper response), campus counseling center or, in rare emergencies, campus police).

Unless this would escalate the situation to unsafe levels, the student should be told that the call is being made and why, and reassured that the faculty member will stay with them until help arrives.

Followup

If a student has disclosed in class or in private to a faculty member, a quick follow up provides additional support. This should not be done publicly. For example, after a disclosure in class, send an email to a student to thank them for sharing and check if they need additional support resources. Below is a suggested format to customize.

- “Thank you again for sharing your story today. I appreciate that you felt comfortable enough to talk about it. When students share stories in class, I usually follow up. If there is a way I can help, please let me know. Also, I always like to share some outside support resources in case you or someone you know ever needs them.”

If you are concerned that a student’s email is not secure (for example, they are a victim of intimate partner violence), a more generic email would be appropriate.

- “Thank you for your participation in class today. If you would like to discuss this further, my office hours this week are (fill in office hours) or by appointment.”

At the end of a private conversation, such as in office hours, faculty should review anything that has been agreed to. If it is safe to do so, what has been agreed to should also be included in a follow up email. End with a final statement of support.

- “We agreed that you will view the video in my office next Tuesday and as soon as you leave, I’ll also email that to you so we have a record of what we worked out. Thank you again for sharing with me what has been going on for you. That helps me work with you to be successful in the class. If there is something else or things change, please let me know.”

Signs a Student May Be Experiencing Consequences of Victimization

The physical, psychological, emotional, and financial consequences of a criminal victimization can manifest in a number of outward signs faculty may observe in students. Many of these signs are not specific to being a victim of crime – they may be signs of other stressors or trauma in a student’s life. Possible signs are listed below.

- Sudden and noticeable change in behavior or engagement in the course.
- Late or missing assignments or exams.
- Decreased work quality.
- Disjointed or incoherent writing.
- Erratic behavior.
- Declining grades.
- Hypervigilant or jumpy behavior in class.
- Difficulty containing emotions, especially anger or sadness.
- Inability to concentrate.
- **Disclosure of victimization experiences**

If a faculty member observes some of these signs, they should reach out to the student to express their concern and offer referral to support resources. An example of how to approach a student is below.

- “Lately I have noticed that you seem to be struggling a bit in class. Whenever I think students might be struggling, I reach out to let them know they can talk to me if needed and to share some resources that might be helpful.”

Faculty Preparation

With preparation and awareness, faculty can be successful teaching about victims of crime and hopefully find it very rewarding. This can help better support victims of crime as well as make all students aware of and more sensitive to the issues that crime victims face. Supplementary material is available to help faculty in these efforts. These include reading materials that provide more information on the nature, extent,

and impact of criminal victimization, referral resources for victims of crime, suggested readings and additional resources, and a course preparation worksheet.

These faculty guidelines provide a basis for helping faculty in this endeavor, but cannot address the needs and unique situations of every student. In applying these guidelines, faculty are reminded to be aware of and sensitive to how issues of difference by culture, age, gender, faith tradition, disability status, race, ethnicity, and other factors may intersect with issues of victimization.

Teaching about criminal victimization and handling disclosures from students can be emotionally difficult for faculty, some of who may have been affected themselves by crime. Faculty should acknowledge this, and remember to engage in self-care and use the referral resources for themselves when necessary.

Suggested Readings and Additional Resources

For victimization statistics and updates, go to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Web site. For example, the 2001 through 2010 statistics are available in the publication *Criminal victimization 2010* at www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv10.pdf.

Barlow, M. R., & Becker-Blease, K. (2012). Caring for our students in courses with potentially threatening content. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 36(2), 240-243.

Black, T. G. (2006). Teaching trauma without traumatizing: Principles of trauma treatment in the training of graduate counselors. *Traumatology*, 12(4), 266-271.

Branch, K. A., Hayes-Smith, R., & Richards, T. N. (2011). Professors' experiences with student disclosures of sexual assault and intimate partner violence: How "helping" students can inform teaching practices. *Feminist Criminology*, 6(1), 54-75.

DeWolfe, D. (2000). Field Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters. D. Nordboe (ed). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Durfee, A., & Rosenberg, K. (2009). Teaching sensitive issues: Feminist pedagogy and the practice of advocacy-based counseling. *Feminist Teacher*, 19(2), 103-121.

Hollander, J. (2000). Fear journals: A strategy for teaching about the social consequences of gendered violence. *Teaching Sociology*, 28(3), 192-205.

Konradi, A. (1993). Teaching about sexual assault: Problematic silences and solutions. *Teaching Sociology*, 21(1), 13-25.

Lewis, N., & Jaramillo, A. (2010). Communication with Victims and Survivors. In March 2010

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

National Victim Assistance Academy Track 1: Foundation-Level Training Participant Text (Chapter 5, pp.5-1-5-30). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. www.ovcttac.gov/nvaa2010/nvaa2010.cfm

Miller, M. (2001). Creating a safe frame for learning: Teaching about trauma and trauma treatment. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 21*(3-4), 159-176. Murray, M., Hook, M., & Seymour, A. (2005). Listen To My Story: Communicating with Victims of Crime Video Discussion Guide. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pdftxt/listen_to_my_story_vdguide.pdf

National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee. (October 2008). Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators. Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Newman, E. (1999). Ethical Issues in Teaching About Violence Against Women. *Women's Studies Quarterly, 27*(1/2), 197-202.

O'Halloran, M. S., & O'Halloran, T. (2001). Secondary traumatic stress in the classroom: Ameliorating stress in graduate students. *Teaching of Psychology, 28*(2), 92-97.

University of California, Irvine Campus Assault Resources and Education. (n.d.) Responding to Incidents of Sexual Assault. Brochure retrieved August 21, 2010 from <http://www.care.uci.edu/files/faculty%20and%20staff%20response.pdf>.

Yllo, K. (1989). Teaching About Violence Against Women. *The Radical Teacher, 36*, pp.19-22.

Zurbriggen, E. L. (2011). Preventing secondary traumatization in the undergraduate classroom: Lessons from theory and clinical practice. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 3*(3), 223-228.

Cited Materials

Sebold, A. (1999). *Lucky*. Boston: Back Bay Books.

3. Resources for Crime Victims

Crime victims and those who know them or work with them can face a number of issues for which support can be helpful. Listed below are a number of national resources. Other places to look for support can be Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) at work, campus resources for college students, and state victim assistance programs.

We recommended that you update this list each semester to ensure that it is current and up-to-date.

Victims of Crime

The National Center for Victims of Crime

www.victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims

National Organization for Victim Assistance

800-TRY-NOVA

www.trynova.org/

Office for Victims of Crime Directory of Crime Victims Services

ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/

Campus Crime

Clery Center for Security on Campus

484-580-8754

<http://clerycenter.org>

Child Abuse

Stop It Now! (sexual abuse)

888-PREVENT

www.stopitnow.org/

Drunk Driving

MADD Victim/Survivor Helpline

877-MADD-HELP (623-3435)

During work hours, callers should ask to speak to the victim specialist

www.madd.org/victim-services/

Elder Abuse

National Center on Elder Abuse

800-677-1116 (M-F, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.)

www.ncea.aoa.gov

Homicide

National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children

888-818-POMC

www.pomc.com/

Identity Theft

Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Hotline

877-ID-THEFT (438-4338)

www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft

Identity Theft Resource Center Victim Assistance Center

888-400-5530

www.idtheftcenter.org/v_resources/v_intro.shtml

Intimate Partner Violence and Family Violence

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-SAFE (7233)

www.ndvh.org/

Sexual Violence

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-HOPE (4673)

<http://online.rainn.org/> (online hotline)

4. Faculty Self-Assessment

The questions below serve as a self-assessment for faculty as they prepare to teach course content regarding victims of crime. Please answer the questions honestly, self-score yourself, and review the provided faculty guidelines and supplemental materials if necessary.

1. If a student discloses to you that they were recently the victim of an assault, the best response is:

- a. That's terrible. I feel so sorry for you.
- b. Of my gosh! Were you drinking?
- c. I know how you feel, but it will get better.
- d. I'm sorry that happened to you.

2. The best policy to deal with student disclosures of victimization in class is:

- a. Announce the first day of class that no sharing of personal experiences with victimization are allowed in the course.
- b. Encourage students who are victims to share in class if they want.
- c. Have a designated personal stories day, with optional participation.
- d. Include a statement in the syllabus that does not encourage sharing, and refers students to support resources.

3. If a student discloses a victimization in class, the best approach is to:

- a. Ignore it and call on someone else.
- b. Express your sympathies and quickly move on.
- c. Express your interest and ask for them to talk about it in more detail.
- d. Thank them for sharing.

4. A student tells you that they were recently the victim of a sexual assault and that it has been very difficult for them to get up and come to class and to focus on school work. What should you do?

- a. Encourage them to set a sleep schedule and stick to it.
- b. Send them to the academic skills center for help with study skills.
- c. Call the police and report the sexual assault.
- d. Give them a rape crisis hotline and discuss any options for accommodations for your class.

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

5. Victim related resources can be shared:

- a. In the syllabus
- b. On a course Web page
- c. On a faculty Web page
- d. All of the above

6. The appropriate time to announce guidelines about sharing personal stories in class is:

- a. On the first day of class
- b. Immediately after a student discloses a victimization
- c. To start each class
- d. Only on days when you think the material might elicit disclosures from students

7. A student discloses to you that they were recently a victim of an assault, what are the first three things you might say?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

8. What are the top three resources for referral you might provide that student?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

**Post-Secondary Education:
Integrating Crime Victims' Issues Into College and University Curricula**

Please self-score your answers:

Question 1: 1 point for d, 0 points for others

Question 2: 1 point for d, 0 points for others

Question 3: 1 point for d, 0 points for others

Question 4: 1 point for d, 0 points for others

Question 5: 1 point for d, 0 points for others

Question 6: 1 point for a, 0 points for others

Total: _____

What your score means:

6-7 Points You are well prepared, but just double check that you have thought about what to say to a student and have a list of resources for referral prepared

4-5 Points You are on your way, but it would be a good idea to re-review the faculty guidelines and further define a plan for responding to students and your list of resources for referral

0-3 Points You need a better developed plan, which would be helped by re-reading the faculty guidelines, and preparing a plan for responding to students and developing a list of resources for referral.