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Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns

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Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns

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

These materials were developed under a cooperative agreement with The U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). OVC funded The University of Massachusetts Lowell, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, along with partners from the University of Massachusetts Boston, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and University of Massachusetts Medical School to develop innovative, multidisciplinary education models that address victimization issues and responses to crime victims.

Purpose

This curriculum kit provides college students an introduction to basic skills for interacting with victims of crime in an internship or field placement setting.

Learning Objectives

After completing this curriculum kit, students should be able to:

- Outline the basics of crisis intervention.
- Plan a response to victims of crime that is appropriate to their role as an intern.
- Model effective communication.
- Identify how and when they may encounter victims of crime in their internship.
- List possible impacts of and reactions to victimization for individuals.

Time Required

Completion of the PowerPoint presentation and included discussions and activities are designed for a 2½-hour class meeting. The PowerPoint is also designed so that it can be presented over two shorter class periods – the first focused on the impact of victimization and the second focused on appropriate responses to victims in an internship setting.

Required Materials

- Equipment needed to use PowerPoint as an instructional tool.
- Equipment needed to view *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* victim statements, which are available on DVD, online or via download (ovcttac.org)

- Blackboard, whiteboard, tear sheets, or other method of recording class brainstorming activities

Suggested Courses

Although this curriculum kit was originally designed for use in the classroom portion of a criminal justice internships course, the kit and its components can be easily adapted to internships courses in other disciplines (such as Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, and Political Science, among others).

Directory of Materials

1. Faculty Materials
 - a. *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns* Faculty Guide
 - b. *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns* PowerPoint presentation
 - c. Exercises
 - Assignment 1: Encountering Victims of Crime in Internships and Field Placements
 - Assignment 2: Building Empathy Writing Assignment
2. Student Materials
 - a. Reading: Victim Impact Statement
 - b. National Resources for Crime Victims Handout

This curriculum kit was created as a part of the National-Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims' Issues into University and College Curricula. The project is funded by a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC, a component of the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice) to achieve the project goals of increasing the numbers of students exposed to information about crime victims and interested in working with crime victims, and thereby improve the future provision of services to crime victims.

Introduction and a Note to Faculty

The goal of this curriculum is to provide college level interns with a basic understanding of the impact of victimization and a set of skills to interact appropriately with victims of crime they may encounter during their internship. The title *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns* underscores that this provides a foundation of understanding how to interact with crime victims, but is not a clinical training (i.e., they are not crisis counselors after having completed this curriculum) and does not replace any training received at their internship host site.

The program is split into three major parts:

- Exploration of where victims of crime may be encountered in the criminal justice system (faculty may substitute material from any relevant system, such as child welfare or human resources, in this section).
- Information on potential consequences of victimization for individuals.
- Basics of crisis intervention and effective communication.

Your primary intent as faculty is to convince students of the need for competent and sensitive treatment of crime victims and provide them with the initial concepts needed for that treatment.

The statistics that are included in these resources were current when the material was developed; however, statistics can become quickly out-of-date. As you prepare to deliver a curriculum kit, be sure to review the material beforehand and include the most recent crime statistics.

There are two studies from the U.S. Department of Justice that measure the scope, magnitude, and impact of crime in the United States:

- The FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR)(www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr)
- Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>)

A third source for crime statistics is:

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>).

The most recent national statistics lag several years behind the calendar year. For example, in 2013, the latest official national statistics are those collected in 2011, which were published in 2012. This lag results from the amount of time and the number of resources required to collect, analyze, and publish information from nationwide reports and interviews about crime and victimization.

Some Notes About the Curriculum

- The curriculum is designed to be flexible so that faculty can adapt and modify the materials to meet the class' needs and their own style.
- The curriculum is designed to be 2 hours and 30 minutes in length – the typical class time for a once a week 3 credit class. The curriculum can be split up into different sections to be presented in shorter class periods and the length can also be adjusted by omitting or expanding the included exercises and discussions.
- There are a number of spots in the curriculum that allow for class participation and discussion. Aside from these, the curriculum is primarily didactic in nature.
- If faculty would like to provide students with more hands-on skills in the basics of crisis intervention, they may add role-play exercises at the end of the curriculum. If faculty does not have experience with crisis intervention, using a guest speaker with crisis intervention or clinical skills is suggested.

While this curriculum will run more smoothly if students are participating, this is not the type of curriculum where it is suggested to randomly call on students. This can be a difficult topic for many; there may be very justifiable reasons for their decision to remain quiet. For more guidance on teaching about victimization, please refer to the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*, located in the Faculty Involvement section.

- This can be a difficult topic for many students. As such, it is important to make yourself available after class to answer question or provide support for students.
- The following is the best practice for implementing this curriculum:
 - ♦ Read this Faculty Guide thoroughly prior to implementing the curriculum.
 - ♦ Use the Faculty Guide to help you write your personal notes as you walk through the curriculum.
 - ♦ Practice several times with mock participants.
 - ♦ Try to avoid reading directly from the guide whenever possible.
 - ♦ To prepare for possible sharing of victimization experiences by students, review the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*, and prepare a list of referral resources on your campus and in the local community.
 - ♦ Encourage students to take notes so they can refer back to these when practicing on their own how to respond to a victim of crime.

Some Notes About the Faculty Guide

This guide is intended to take you through the PowerPoint presentation that contains the core curriculum for *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns*. The guide is set up to take you through slide by slide, explaining the goals of each slide and the best practices for facilitating each slide. As mentioned earlier, much of this curriculum is didactic. As such, many of slides speak for themselves. In these cases, it will be made clear that simply reading the slide and teaching its core ideas will be sufficient.

PowerPoint Presentation/Class Lecture



Slide 1.

Introduce the curriculum kit.



Slide 2.

The project is designed to:

- Broaden college and university students' awareness of crime victims' issues and knowledge of appropriate responses;
- Increase the number and diversity of students exposed to and educated in crime victims' issues;
- Give victim issues a new level of prominence in university and college curricula.

Note to Faculty:

Faculty should be aware of the appropriate professional resources for students who are victims of crime. In preparation for this lecture, faculty may find it helpful to develop a short list of campus and local community resources that can be used to refer students to, as well as including some national resources.

Modify the resources on the next two slides and provide appropriate contact information for your campus. 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. National resources are included on the National Resources for Crime Victims. Have enough copies to hand out to each student.

Student Resources



Slide 3.

Campus resources to list typically include:

- Counseling.
- Health services
- College chaplain/faith community.
- Dean of students.
- Women's center.
- Campus police.



Slide 4.

Local community resources to list typically include:

- Rape crisis center.
- Domestic violence shelter agency.
- Local or county victim-witness office (often a part of the prosecutor's office).



Slide 5.

National Resources Information

A list of national resources for victims of crime appears at the end of this curriculum kit. Faculty should provide each student with this list; it is included in the Student Materials of this curriculum kit.



Slide 6.

Speak briefly about the goals of the curriculum and what you will be covering.

- *Who and What:* Role as an Intern
- *When and Where:* Encountering Victims of Crime
- *Why:* Impact of Victimization

- *How:* Basics of Crisis Intervention and Effective Communication



Slide 7.

Go over the ground rules for the curriculum. This is very important, as there may be students in the class whose lives have been impacted by victimization and it helps to set the tone for why it is important to treat victims of crime with sensitivity and fairness:

- a) **Self-Care:** This curriculum has the potential to be emotionally provocative. Remind students that it is OK for them to take a break and leave the room, go get a drink of water, etc., at any point and to express any concerns or questions about the material once the program is complete.
- b) **Participation:** Remind students that participation is not mandatory, but that the curriculum works well when people are asking questions and providing responses.
- c) **Respectful communication:** Warn students to, e.g., “Please be cautious of the language you use and please respectful of the material and other students”.
- d) **Confidentiality:** Remind students, e.g., “Please do not use any identifying information when sharing stories (whether it be during small group work or as part of the larger group). Always protect the identity of whom you are talking about. Please feel comfortable in sharing your stories, but be cautious of how you do so.”
- e) **Sharing:** Student self-disclosure of victimization experiences should be gently discouraged. While it can be important for victims to talk about their experiences, the classroom (or in an online class environment) typically is not an appropriate environment for such disclosures. “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. If you need support, I am happy to refer you to resources.” For guidance on responding to a student disclosure to the class or to you, please refer to the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*.
- f) **Individual questions:** Remind students that they may want to ask some questions one-on-one after the program. Remind students that you will make yourself available to answer any questions they may have.

Suggested Talking Points:

This lecture will provide a very basic knowledge of some of the issues of crime victims that are relevant to you as interns in a victim services agency or an agency that sometimes deals with victims of crime.

So what we will go through today is a basic overview that starts to address the following questions about working with victims of crime: Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How?

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Tell students that today is going to be interactive. There are lots of points of discussion and the more people can participate, the better. Internships are a great way to learn, and it is important that we also take advantage of these opportunities to learn from the experiences each one of you is having at your placement. To start, it would be helpful if we could do introductions and have each of you tell us where your placement is.



Slide 8.

Ground the curriculum by reinforcing what role students play vis-à-vis victims of crime. The “Who You ARE” is meant to help students feel empowered in their ability to help make things better for victims of crime and the “Who You Are NOT” defines the boundaries of their role and emphasizes that they not clinical professionals who should be trying to do therapy.

Add that interns may not be in programs directly serving victims but there are many positions/organizations that serve victims through which they can gain exposure.

Define victim service provider and allied professional on the board and follow through with the brainstorming exercises.

Victim Service Provider: An organization or professional position with the primary purpose of providing help and services to victims. This may be for victims in general or for certain types of victims.

Brainstorming Exercise:

What are some examples of victim service providers?

Possible responses include:

Crisis line workers, child advocacy centers, rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, child protective services agencies, victim advocates in the criminal justice system. Those who provide services to victims might also be found in schools, juvenile detention, and other juvenile delinquency service locations.

Allied Professional: An organization or person whose primary role is not to help victims, but who may regularly encounter and provide services to victims.

Brainstorming Exercise:

What are some examples of allied professionals?

Possible responses include:

Social workers, mental health workers, youth services workers, medical professionals (doctors, nurses, etc.), teachers, human resources, employee assistance programs (EAP), law enforcement.

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Be very clear that after this lecture you are in no way, shape, or form trained and qualified to perform crisis intervention or be a victim advocate. If those are skills that you need, you should be provided with that training from your placement site. Have any of you received training or instruction on working with victims as a part of your internship or field placement?

What this lecture will do is give you the basics to build on and help you to understand the general approach to working with victims of crime.



Slide 9.

Introduce students to the idea that responses to victimization are often not what outsiders expect. Victims can go through each stage more than once and their needs for assistance and support may vary with each stage.

On the board, define Emergency and Crisis.

- Emergency:¹ When immediate intervention is needed to prevent harm, injury, or death.
- Crisis:² When a person is faced with a situation that cannot be resolved by his or her normal methods of coping.
- Every day: Maintenance.

Suggested Comments:

This is **not** a one-time linear process. For example, victims of intimate partner violence may be encountered in an emergency situation more than once. Many victims of all crimes experience periods of crisis more than once. This can be immediately after the victimization or a period of crisis may emerge a short or even long time later.

What we call every day on the slide is what some also call “maintenance.” Even when victims of crime are not in a period of emergency or crisis, that does not mean they are not impacted by the victimization and do not still have needs.

For example, an assault victim may be physically safe (not at the emergency stage) and relatively stable (not at the crisis stage) but may still need to go to counseling to help combat fear of re-victimization and may need information about what is happening with the related case in the criminal justice system.

Be aware that victims may reach out for help and support during any of these stages.

¹ Definition of emergency taken from the Office for Victims of Crime, *Core Skills: Crisis Intervention, Victim Assistance Training Online*. Accessed June 29, 2010 from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/vatonline/index.cfm>

² Definition of crisis taken from the Office for Victims of Crime, *Core Skills: Crisis Intervention, Victim Assistance Training Online*. Accessed June 29, 2010 from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/vatonline/index.cfm>

Discussion:

In your internship, at what stage(s) are you most likely to encounter victims of crime? Why?



Slide 10.

The slide is specific to the criminal justice system to help remind students of how the criminal justice system works and where victims of crime may intersect with the system. Although related systems may vary by state and locality, it may be useful to add a slide about the child welfare response to victimization or modify the existing slide to indicate how that system works in parallel and in intersection with the criminal justice system.

For other disciplines or internship settings, this slide should be replaced with an appropriate schematic from the relevant system.

Suggested Talking Points:

Although the criminal justice system is focused on offenders (hence the name *criminal* justice system), one of the major reasons we are concerned with offenders is so that we don't have more victims. So it is somewhat ironic that the system has very little focus on victims and giving them the support that they need.

Victims are the “gatekeepers” of the criminal justice system – if they do not report crimes, the system is not activated. If victims do not take part in the investigations and prosecutions, offenders cannot be brought to justice.

However, because the system is oriented to offenders, victims often feel used by the system, resulting in what is often referred to as a second victimization. Appropriate and sensitive treatment of victims at the various stages of the criminal justice system has the potential to help victims in their own lives and improve the quality of justice provided by the criminal justice system.³

Remember, if you are interning in the criminal justice system, the system is obligated to recognized crime victims' rights and treat victims of crime with fairness, dignity, and respect.⁴

³ Kilpatrick, D.G., & Otto, R.K. (1987). Constitutionally Guaranteed Participation in Criminal Justice Proceedings for Victims: Potential Effects on Psychological Functioning. *Wayne Law Review*, 34, 7-28.

⁴ The Justice for All Act, PL 108-405.

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Brainstorming Exercise:

Where in each of these steps might you encounter victims of crime? What role does the victim play in each of these stages of the criminal justice process? Where in this process would victims encounter victim services providers or victim advocates?

Possible responses include:

- Crime: As the victim (you might be a helper or bystander).
- Police: Reporting the crime; at the crime scene; during the investigation; on patrol; roadside stops.
- Prosecutors: Witnesses (both for the prosecution and for the defense); during the investigation; at trial; preparing a victim impact statement; gathering information for restitution requests; keeping victims informed of key decisions and status changes; as defendants.
- Court: At trial (witnesses for both the prosecution and the defense); during the court/trial process (e.g., bail hearings); delivering victim impact statements; in civil court filing for restraining orders; in family court in divorce and child custody matters.
- Corrections: Gathering information for pre-sentence reports; at parole hearings; during notification of status changes.



Slide 11.

Begin the section of the curriculum that focuses students on the consequences victimization can have for individuals. The slide shares the most recent incidents numbers for victimization from the National Crime Victimization Survey.^{5,6,7} It introduces the idea that the consequences of victimization spread beyond the direct victim to others, including friends, family, and co-workers.

⁵ Truman, J.L. & Planty, M. (2012). Criminal Victimization, 2011: Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: National Crime Victimization Survey (NCJ 239437). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁶ This slide can be updated each fall with the newest numbers from the National Crime Victimization Survey. This can be accessed at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=9pubs> or by visiting <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm> and searching in the section on victims.

⁷ The NCVS only measures crimes against those age 12 and older. Violent crimes (aggravated assault, rape & sexual assault, robbery, and simple assault but NOT homicide) are measured against persons. Property crimes (household burglary, motor vehicle theft, and theft) are measured against households.

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The goal with this section (the “why?” section, which is slides 11-16) is for students to understand that there are many victims, the consequences of victimization can cause considerable costs and harm to victims and others in their lives, and it is important to know how to interact with victims of crime appropriately, because those interactions can help or cause additional harm.

If additional detail is desired on the nature and extent of criminal victimization, please refer to the “Overview of Crime and Victimization in the United States”^{8,9} and “The Nature and Extent of Criminal Victimization”¹⁰



Slide 12.

Begin a more detailed examination of the potential consequences of victimization for individuals. This slide is relatively straightforward. If additional detail is desired, please refer to the “Cost of Crime”¹¹ included in the Curriculum Kit “The Impact of Victimization” that is also available as a part of the Integrating Victims’ Issues Into University and College Curricula project.



Slide 13.

Suggested Talking Points:

In general, becoming a victim of crime takes away control from victims over their person or their lives. Being victimized undermines people’s belief that they can control what happens to them, that bad things will not happen to good people, and that the world is a fair and comprehensible place.¹² Once those beliefs have been shattered, it makes it difficult for an individual to move forward in their life and make decisions. The victimization experience can also globally undermine an individual’s sense of trust in others. (To foreshadow later in this curriculum kit, those efforts that help victims are ones that focus on building their feelings of control up again.)

⁸ The National Center for Victims of Crime. (2012). Overview of Crime and Victimization in the United States. In *2012 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Resource Guide*. Washington, DC: The National Center for Victims of Crime.

⁹ The National Center for Victims of Crime provides updated information each year as a part of its National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Resource Guide. This can be accessed through their organization at www.ncvc.org.

¹⁰ Hirschel, D. (2010). The Nature and Extent of Criminal Victimization. In *For Faculty: Teaching About Victimization* (pp.19-25). Lowell, MA: University of Massachusetts Lowell.

¹¹ The National Center for Victims of Crime. (2012). Cost of Crime. In *2012 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Resource Guide*. Washington, DC: The National Center for Victims of Crime.

¹² Janoff-Bulman, R., & Frieze, I.H. (1983). A Theoretical Perspective for Understanding Reactions to Victimization. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39(2), 1-17.



Slide 14.

Continue the exploration of the potential consequences of criminal victimization by looking in detail at specific symptoms victims of crime may experience. Many of these symptoms exacerbate the feeling of loss of control. The discussion related to this and the next slide helps to translate lists of symptoms or consequences to students' understanding of how this may manifest in a particular victim's life and how they may encounter that as an intern.

Suggested Talking Points:

This slide is relatively straightforward. If additional detailed is desired, please refer to the Faculty Involvement section of this curriculum. For child victims, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) Web site includes considerable information on the impact of different types of victimization on children (www.nctsn.org).

One study (Resnick et al. 1993) found a lifetime prevalence of PTSD of almost 26 percent among crime victims.¹³

Discussion:

How might a victim experiencing some or all of these symptoms act when you encounter them?

Possible responses include:

Wide diversity, including polar opposites. For example, some victims in the immediate aftermath go into shock, while other react with uncontrollable sobbing and hysteria, and still others react by doing things that seem strange, like laughing uncontrollably and focusing on small, seemingly irrelevant and unrelated things.

Discussion:

How might the implications of these symptoms differ for victims who are experiencing family violence (e.g., child maltreatment, intimate partner violence, dating violence, elder abuse, sibling violence)? How might a victim of family violence experiencing some of all of these symptoms act when you encounter them? How might it differ from other victims?



Slide 15.

Prompt students to explore the implications the consequences of victimization may have for a broad range of aspects of a victim's life, including interpersonal relationships, work, school, and faith.

¹³ Resnick, H.S., D.G. Kilpatrick, B.S. Dansky, B.E. Saunders, and C.L. Best. 1993. "Prevalence of Civilian Trauma and PTSD in a Representative National Sample of Women." *Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology* 61(6).

Brainstorming Exercise:

What implications might these various symptoms have for:

- Work?
- School?
- Relationships with spouses or partners?
- Relationships with friends and family?
- Parenting?
- Faith or religiosity?



Slide 16.

- a) Wrap up the section on the potential consequences of criminal victimization in a powerful way via video clips of victims sharing their stories. These clips can be difficult for some to watch, so remind students about the basics of self-care and that they may leave if they need to. In preparation for potential impact on students or disclosures from showing the video clips, please review the materials in *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*, and have knowledge of local support resources.

Exercise:

For this slide, you will need access to the *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* video clips. *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* includes 14 segments from victims of crime and is 57 minutes long. It is recommended to view all of the segments ahead of time and select two or three segments to view with the class. Segment 2: Alan and Segment 9: Teri have worked well with past internship classes. The segments are available multiple ways.

- 1) Files of each of the 14 segments are available for download through the Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC) at www.ovcttac.gov/victimimpact/presenters_toolbox.cfm
- 2) The video in its entirety is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ghpl4vDZ3s
- 3) A DVD is available from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The DVD is free and shipping and handling is \$5. It can be ordered from their website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/library/videoclips.html

Suggested Talking Points:

It is one thing to go through lists of symptoms and think about how they might impact people. Now let's take a few minutes to hear victims talk about their experiences, which also helps us transition into how other people's reactions to victims matters.

These are first-person accounts from victims of crime of their experiences, and they can be difficult to watch. I just wanted to remind you of the self-care pointers we went over at the beginning of class. If you feel you need to leave during the video, please do so quietly.

Also, please remember to be sensitive in our comments and demeanor in reacting to and discussing the clips.

Discussion:

- What surprised you about these stories?
- What did you learn by listening to these stories?
- How were these individuals affected by the actions of others?
- What needs did these individuals have?



Slide 17.

Link the consequences of victimization to the positive actions students, as interns, can take to help. This slide is relatively straightforward.¹⁴

Suggested Talking Points:

Now that we've seen the negative consequences that victimization can have for victims, the real question is, how can we help? As interns in a criminal justice or related agency, you may come in contact with victims of crime, and how you work with them can help or harm.

It is important that you develop the skills and knowledge specific to assisting victims of crimes. You can attend additional training on communication skills, such as [VAT Online](#), to build these skills.

The remainder of the class is focused on getting you into the proper mindset and introduce you to some fundamentals of interacting with victims. This information won't make you a professional, but will give you the basics.

¹⁴ For examples of how reactions of others impact survivors' outcomes, see Campbell, R. (2005). What Really Happened? A Validation Study of Rape Survivors' Help-Seeking Experiences With the Legal and Medical Systems. *Violence and Victims*, 20(1), 55-68; and Goodkind, J.R., Gillum, T.L., Bybee, D.I., & Sullivan, C.M. (2003). The Impact of Family and Friends' Reactions on the Well-Being of Women With Abusive Partners. *Violence Against Women*, 9(3), 347-373.



Slide 18.

Introduces the concept of crisis intervention and its goals, before the curriculum moves on to the component steps. The suggested comments focus on developing appropriate empathy in students to underscore the importance of treating victims of crime appropriately. This means treating victims with respect and providing information and support, but understanding they need to be helped not “saved.”

Suggested Talking Points:

In general as we go through these guidelines today, think about the most stressful, confusing, or overwhelming times in your life. When you reached out or interacted with others, what was helpful? What was not? How did you want to be treated? How did you not want to be treated?

While everyone is different and the same thing would not work for all people, the steps we are going to go through are the closest we get. For example, while what you may have wanted was to be hugged, that is exactly what some people would not have wanted. But probably most people would want to be carefully listened to, heard, and talked to nicely. For each step, try to think of how people want to be treated by others when things are going wrong.



Slide 19.

This is the first of several slides that walk students through the basic steps of crisis intervention. One of the basic needs of victims of crime is for information,¹⁵ even on a simple level, which this step addresses.

Suggested Talking Points:

Something as simple as providing a name may help a victim of crime feel like there is someone there who is listening and wants to help.



Slide 20.

This slide explains is a key step in crisis intervention: determining that the person is safe. If the person is not safe, this is not crisis intervention – this is an emergency.

Suggested Comments:

In some situations it may be clear, but especially if interpersonal contact is by phone, it is important to first insure that a crime victim is safe. This can be done with questions like:

- Are you safe right now?

¹⁵ Kaniasty, K., & Norris, F.H. (1992). Social Support and Victims of Crime: Matching Event, Support, and Outcome. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 20(2), 211-241.

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- Is it safe for you to talk to me now?

There are also physiological cues that can signal stress or a lack of safety. These may include:

- Unusual breathing patterns or difficulty breathing.
- Pale skin tone.
- Perspiration (sweating).

This step is particularly important when working with victims of family violence, but can be an issue for any type of crime victim. A victim seeking assistance for identity theft or a burglary may also be a victim of intimate partner violence. Or they may not have told those around them of their victimization, and do not want them to know for important reasons. Therefore, this is an important step to take when dealing with any category of crime victim.

If a person is not physically safe, the most important thing is for them to get to safety, which may require calling 911. If this is in person, an intern should immediately consult their supervisor.

After establishing that the person is safe, if necessary, calm the person down. This will require the use of both spoken and body language.

- Body Language
 - ♦ Remain outwardly calm
 - ♦ Be patient as you wait for the person to calm down
 - ♦ Maintain eye contact
 - ♦ Smile reassuringly
- Spoken Language
 - ♦ Speak calmly in an even tone – don't raise your voice, yell, or talk excitedly
 - ♦ Wait for the person to stop speaking – don't interrupt
 - ♦ Examples of phrases to use:
 - ~ Could you speak a little slower? I am having trouble keeping up.
 - ~ It sounds like you are upset. Would you like to sit down?

Discussion:

Can you think of other examples?

While it is not your job to endure verbal abuse and you should not, remember that even if a person is angry or upset, you need to stay calm and be respectful. They may have very good reasons to be angry, even if it is unfair to direct it towards you.



Slide 21.

Introduce the idea of effective listening, which will be covered in more detail a bit later in the curriculum, and ties it back to what victims need.

Note that it is critical that students develop listening skills that are specific to victims of crimes. Attending additional training on communication skills will help build these skills. Also, role plays with experienced service providers will help students develop the listening and communication skills they need to assist victims.

Suggested Talking Points:

Once you have a safe and calm person, it is time to hear what they have to say and find out what they need. This entails practicing **effective listening** techniques, which we will talk more about in a few minutes, so that you hear what it is the person is saying without imposing judgment or expressing your own opinions. Only then can you take steps to help someone. As you listen to the person, be aware that there are three major needs of crime victims.¹⁶

1. The need to feel safe.
2. The need to express their emotions.
3. The need to know “what comes next” after their victimization (note how this is a need for information, which we talked about being important a few slides ago).



Slide 22.

Continue with the basic principles of listening and assessing by providing questions to support each step.

Suggested Talking Points:

Your role is to listen, be supportive, and determine what the issues or problems are that need to be dealt with right then. It may be as simple as keeping someone calm and engaged until someone else in your organization is ready to speak with them or it may entail having to prioritize from a number of issues the crime victim is facing. Work with the victim to identify the problem to address first. As a reminder, crisis intervention approaches are not meant to solve all problems, but to deal with immediate issues facing a client. This means addressing questions like:

¹⁶ The three major needs of crime victims taken from Office for Victims of Crime, *First Response to Victims of Crime* (NCJ 176791), pp.8-24, May 2000.

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- What are the things that need to be addressed right now?
- What are the things that can be addressed right now?

The next step is to assess what resources are available to address the problem you have identified to be solved. What resources – both internal and external, are available to address the problem? Below are some helpful questions to ask to assess what is available to help solve the problem:

- What has worked to help you cope with stressful events in the past?
 - ◆ If needed, help people think broadly. What might be some options?
 - ~ Options that help might include counseling/therapy, exercise, meditation, making lists, or medication.
 - ~ Other options might include particular people, groups, or services that were helpful in the past.
- Who might be able to help you with this issue? What are some resources that might help?
 - ◆ Again, help people to think broadly and, for yourself, remember that the impacts of crime on victims are multi-faceted, and can include psychological health, finances, physical health, relationships, employment, and material needs.
 - ◆ Problem solve creatively. Those who might be able to help include family, friends, the criminal justice system, victim services providers, health care providers, faith communities, mental health professionals, and other government and non-government agencies.
 - ~ Resources may be available locally, at the state level, or nationally (see provided National Resources for Crime Victims or the Office for Victims of Crime online Directory of Crime Victim Services at <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>).

Resources for support do not have to be specifically designed for crime victims to be of help. For example, someone victimized in public housing may be eligible to transfer to another residence to help with safety concerns, which is something that could be addressed with the local public housing agency.

A person whose car was vandalized may be able to repair the damages through government sponsored victim compensation or through comprehensive coverage on an automobile insurance policy.

A victim of a violent crime may be eligible for medical treatment for injuries and counseling with a therapist through health care insurance.

Brainstorming Exercise:

What resources in the communities you are working in can you think of that might be helpful for victims of crime?

Brainstorming Exercise:

What have you learned at your internship about responding to clients in crisis? What helpful tips have colleagues at your internship provided to you? What policies does your internship have that are helpful in dealing with clients in crisis?



Slide 23.

Move students from assessing the problem to using that information to work with a victim of crime to create a practical plan of action.

Remind students that they will need additional training, help from a supervisor, and knowledge of the protocols and procedures of the organization they are interning with in order to create an effective action plan for a victim.

Suggested Talking Points:

Once you have worked with the person to identify a problem to address and have assessed the resources available, it is time to help the person make a plan to address the problem. Encourage the person to talk aloud through a step by step plan of what to do.

Examples of your role in taking action include:

- Providing referrals (such as giving brochures, providing names and phone numbers)
- Providing information (such as explaining the next steps in the criminal justice process)
- Empowering crime victims (positive reinforcement of them making their own decisions and taking action, using phrases like “You are doing a great job on this.”)



Slide 24.

The slide explores the final step in crisis intervention, but it is important to emphasize that while it seems repetitive, review is important. Most people do not comprehend or remember all information with only one exposure, and victims of crime are no exception. Reviewing reinforces the plan and may uncover any gaps or areas of misunderstanding that then can be addressed.

Suggested Talking Points:

At the end of an interaction with a crime victim, take a moment to review with them the steps they decided to take next. Make sure that they have any information or referrals to resources that they need, in hard copy whenever possible. Make sure they also have a way to contact you or the appropriate person in case they need to ask additional questions. It is not unusual for crime victims to forget some of what you have told them, and need to ask again.



Slide 25.

Return to Step 3 of crisis intervention by going into more detail on what effective communication is and is not.

Suggested Talking Points:

When working with a victim of crime *DO*:

- Practice effective communication (which we will go into more detail about in the next few slides).
- Be attentive to non-verbal communication from the victim and from you, such as eye contact and body language. Someone fidgeting in a chair who cannot make eye contact may be nervous and may need additional reassurance.
- Maintain appropriate physical boundaries. As a general rule, do not touch a victim of crime. While you may want to hug a person to provide comfort, never touch a victim of crime without asking first.
- Be comfortable with expressions of emotions. People may be angry or may need to cry (or both). If they realize this makes you uncomfortable, the chances of an open conversation where you actually find out what you can help with are limited. It may be a good idea to have tissues ready and to wait patiently as someone cries.
- Remember that they are people, just like everyone else, but they have been a victim of a crime – treat them as an individual.

When working with a victim of crime *DO NOT*:

- Judge their actions before, during, or after the victimization.
 - ♦ “Why did you think it was a good idea to...”
- Make decisions for them – victims have already had control taken away from them through the victimization and part of helping them is helping them regain control, not to try to control them by making their decisions (they do not need to be “saved”). This is often referred to as an empowerment model.

- Make promises you cannot keep.
 - ♦ “I will make sure that everything is going to be OK.”
- Guess at answers or provide information that you are not sure is accurate.



Slide 26.

Focus on the active listening component of effective communication.

Suggested Talking Points:

Active listening is:¹⁷

- Listening carefully to what the speaker is saying, without judgment or evaluation.
- Listening to the content of the message as well as the feelings being expressed.
- Attempting to stand in the other’s shoes to understand and relate to another’s situations and feelings.

Brainstorming Exercise:

What are some examples of active listening?

Responses should include:

- Listening to a person’s story without interrupting.
- Allowing for silence.
- Asking questions for clarification.
- Focusing on what a person is telling you instead of thinking about what you are going to say next.
- Setting your own reactions aside and focusing on the person’s feelings.



Slide 27.

Focus on the paraphrasing component of effective communication.

¹⁷ Foundations of Effective Communication adapted from Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. *Module 5: Communication with Victims and Survivors, March 2010 NVAA Foundation-Level Training Curriculum*. Downloaded June 29,2010 from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/nvaa2010/nvaa2010.cfm>.

Suggested Talking Points:

Repeating back in your own words what you understood the person to say. Repeating portions of what the crime victim has said communicates understanding, interest, and caring. It also helps to clarify points and address potential miscommunications.

Examples of phrases to use:

- “So what I think you are saying is...”
- “I have heard you say that...”
- “It sounded to me like.....Is that accurate?”
- “Let’s see if I am understanding this correctly...”

Brainstorm Exercise:

Can you think of other respectful ways to paraphrase?

It is OK to repeat back in your own words, so long as it does not alter the meaning of what the crime victim said. In some cases, you may want to use the same terminology and wording as the victim uses. For example, if someone says they were attacked but describes to you something you think was a rape, in responding to them, still refer to it as an attack.



Slide 28.

Focus on the reflective listening component of effective communication.

Suggested Talking Points:

This is mirroring the person’s feelings back to them verbally, whether those feelings and emotions have been literally stated by the person or not. This requires that you listen not only to the content of what someone is saying, but the way they are saying it, as well as paying attention to what is unsaid – their facial expressions, movements (such as nervous tapping or clenching fists in anger), lack of eye contact, and other body language. This makes sure that you are correctly interpreting how a person is feeling. Examples of phrases to use:

- “It sounds like you are feeling...”
- “When you told me your story, you sounded sad. Is that accurate?”

Brainstorm Exercise:

Can you think of other reflective listening phrases?

Be clear that reflective listening is *NOT* therapy – it is identifying and clarifying emotions, not working to resolve them.



Slide 29.

Focus on the affirming component of effective communication.

Suggested Talking Points:

Affirming is validating a victim's experiences and reinforcing their strengths. Affirming for someone that what happened is wrong and that they are moving forward helps to support a crime victim to actually move forward to cope with their victimization experience.

Brainstorm Exercise:

- What do you think you could say to be affirming?
- What might you do that would be affirming?
- What things do people often say, maybe to be helpful, that are not affirming?

Examples of affirming phrases to use:

- "I am sorry that this has happened to you."
- "Many people have experienced this. You are not alone."
- "The way you are feeling is normal."
- "It's OK to be [fill in the emotion – angry, sad, numb, etc.]"
- "It was not your fault. No one deserves to be a victim."
- "You are very resourceful to have been able to..."
- "I can see that you are very good at ..."

Affirmation is also communicated non-verbally. Examples include:

- Maintaining eye contact
- Smiles of encouragement (when appropriate)
- Nodding in agreement
- Facial expressions that communicate support and interest
- Occasional mm-hmmm and uh-huhs

It is also important to highlight examples that are not affirming – those that can be detrimental to a crime victim's progress.

Examples of phrases NOT to use include:

- “That’s terrible.”
- “You should...”
- “You need to...”
- “It could have been worse.”
- “I know how you feel.”
- “If it were me, I know I just could not deal with this.”
- “That happened to my friend. He’s fine now so you will be fine.”



Slide 30.

Bring the curriculum full circle back to the beginning point of what the appropriate role of an intern is vis-à-vis a victim of crime. It is important to equip interns to respond appropriately to the victims of crime they may encounter, but help them understand the boundaries within which they operate – that they are not therapists helping a victim to resolve emotional issues; that they are not the police or a prosecutor who has to investigate a crime; that they are not a judge who has to decide issues of culpability; that they may be friendly, but are not the victim’s friend. This return to their role after imparting skills of crisis intervention and effective listening helps them apply those concepts to real life.

Suggested Talking Points:

Remember, your role as a student in an internship or field placement is not as a therapist or to investigate a crime. However, you may need to ask questions to be able to provide support and information to a crime victim.

There are a few important things to ask yourself before asking questions of a crime victim:

- What is the minimum that I need to know right now 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?



Slide 31.

Questions should not be asked based on a personal curiosity about what happened. Ask questions one at a time, and wait for the answers. It may be helpful to use paraphrasing to insure that you have correctly understood the answers that are given.

An **open-ended question** requires more than a yes or no answer or either/or answer. An example of an open-ended question is

- “Tell me what happened when the intruder broke into your house.”

A **closed-ended question** can be answered with a “yes” or “no” or an either/or answer. For example, “When the intruder broke into your house, did he go upstairs or downstairs?”

Be careful of asking all closed-ended questions. That does not give the victim of crime a chance to tell you what they think is important and what they need, and it is hard to communicate support and interest as part of closed-ended questions.



Slide 32.

If you take notes on your communication with a victim, keep in mind that anything you document is discoverable. That means it can be used by the defense in case of a trial.



Slide 33.

Continue to link crisis intervention issues for victims of crime with actual practice in internships. Assuming students have started their internships, their internship placements should have already covered issues of confidentiality and mandated reporting.

Suggested Talking Points:

Confidentiality

Make sure you are clear on the confidentiality policies of your internship/field placement and that you effectively communicate them to crime victims. Don't promise to keep everything confidential if you cannot, and explain to them what can and cannot be kept confidential and why.

Mandated Reporting

In many of the internships and field placements you are in, confidentiality is limited by the requirements of mandated reporting. A **mandated reporter** is someone who is required by the job they are in to report certain types of victimization or abuse if it comes to their attention.

Examples of positions that are commonly mandated reporters are teachers, social workers, doctors and other health care workers, mental health professionals, childcare providers, and law enforcement. In some states, mandated reporters also include clergy, probation/parole officers, and victim advocates.

Typically, mandated reporters are required to report abuse they become aware of against children and dependent adults. Students should make sure that they know whether or not they are mandated reporters in their role in their placement and what their placement's policies and procedures are regarding mandated reporting.

Cultural Differences

The guidelines in this curriculum kit are meant as a very basic starting block on working with victims of crime. It is important to emphasize to students that communication varies with culture. For example, in some cultures it is normative not to make eye contact, so lack of eye contact is not a signal of distress or discomfort. Students need to be open to cultural differences as just that – differences not inferiorities.

Practicing the effective communication skills above can help students address those differences, as active listening, paraphrasing, and reflective listening help to identify points of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Diversity

Because victimization can happen to anyone, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion and faith, education, disability, economic standing, or anything else you can think of, victims are a diverse group of people. Again, these guidelines provide the basics but each victim and their experience are unique – victimization intersects with who a person is and their other life experiences.

These intersections affect the consequences victimization has, how someone interacts with others, and what services may be helpful.

Situations such as being a minor, homeless, a non-citizen, deaf, or gay, lesbian, or transgender have important implications for interacting and accessing services. These are beyond the scope of this basic curriculum, but there are many resources available that address the needs of a diverse range of victims.¹⁸



Slide 34.

Begin the process of closing up the curriculum by focusing interns on how working with victims may impact themselves, and steps to self-care.

Suggested Talking Points:

Working and interacting with victims of crime is often incredibly rewarding. At the same time, it can be emotionally difficult and take a negative toll on you. This is important to be aware of so you can watch yourself for signs of what people refer to as secondary or vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. These signs include:

¹⁸ The Office for Victims of Crime website (www.ovc.gov) has a number of resources, including videos, reports, and trainings on specific victim populations and helping victims of specific types of crime.

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- Recalling the victimization event or person
- Inability to stop thinking about the stories or situations of victims you worked with
- Avoiding things associated with the event, such as avoiding interacting with the client
- Emotional numbing
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or unexpected outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exaggerated startle reflex
- Loss of trust

Professionals experiencing secondary trauma often experience:

- Decreased self-confidence
- Loss of interest in work
- Job dissatisfaction
- Negative attitude
- Apathy
- Lack of appreciation
- Detachment
- Withdrawal from colleagues
- Impatience
- Decrease in quality of relationships
- Decreased work quality

To avoid these or to deal with them if you notice them about yourself, it is important to engage in self-care. This involves taking conscious steps to engage in activities that help you process what you have experienced. Self-care activities may include:

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- Physical Health: exercise, sleep (e.g., enough sleep, regular sleep schedule), diet (e.g., healthy diet, stay hydrated, eat meals at regular, scheduled times).
- Spiritual Health: meditation, prayer.
- Emotional and Psychological Health: peer support (e.g., debriefing or talking with others who do similar work), leisure activities (e.g., taking vacations, vacations, reading books, watching movies, gardening, singing, dancing – what do you like to do to de-stress?), journaling, professional help (e.g., counseling, support groups for people who work with victims).
- Workplace/Professional Health: take short breaks, ask for help when you need it.

Discussion:

How will you know if this work is “getting to you?” What is your plan for self-care?



Slide 35.

Wrap up the curriculum with a reminder of how students, as interns, can help victims of crime. If time allows, this is a good time to split students into small groups and have them practice role playing crisis intervention and effective communication.

Suggested Talking Points:

I hope today provided you with some insight into the issues that crime victims face, and how you might encounter victims of crime in your placement and in your future professional career. Although this was just an overview and you should not feel like now you are trained to work with victims of crime, this starts to give you a basis to build on.

Through your internships, you have the opportunity to make a positive difference in someone’s life. Victims of crime need and deserve to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. They want to be believed, and informed of what is happening or might happen in their case, and told of services available and how to use them.

References

Cares, A.C. (2013). “Responding to victims of crime: Basics for interns.” Lowell, MA: University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Student Reading

Victim Impact Statement for Jane Mosher-Buyno*

Written and Spoken by her Mother, Nancy McAlley

Your honor, I would like to express to the court and Jacquinda, what the impact of my daughter Jane's death has had on my life. Jane was 25 years old and the mother of Serenity who was three years old. There is no way to bring Jane back to us, but today I want to speak to her, so the court and Jacquinda can hear my pain.

Jane, when I heard about your death and the police said that you had been shot by Jacquinda, I felt numb. I was in shock, I couldn't move. All I could think about was getting to you. It didn't matter that you were gone. I needed to be near you and Serenity needed us. I started crying and cried all day long. I cried in the car all the way to Virginia. I cried at the police station when we talked about you and what had happened. We asked if we could please see you. I cried myself to sleep that night.

We were not able to have Serenity stay with us. They didn't know who the family was and she had been put in the care of social services. It was a Friday and we wouldn't be able to have her until Monday. Not only did we have to deal with the pain of losing you, we could not even have Serenity, your daughter, with us.

The next day we had to go through your personal belongings. I don't know how I functioned as well as I did. I was in shock, numb. I only knew that we had to get this done. We would not be in VA again for a long time. I was so sad to see the clothes you wore, the jacket that used to keep you warm, the pictures of your daughter Serenity, that you had up in the house. I remembered how you were so proud of her and took her with you everywhere you went. I am devastated that she will never be able to share the love of life that you were able to bring to all the lives of your daycare children and others.

You often come into my mind with your big smile and laugh. I have lost a wonderful person who was a part of me. You were someone who believed in the goodness of people and trusted, even when warned of danger. I am angry and saddened that I could never convince you of the danger that lurked in your life. I am heartbroken that I will never see you smile or hear you laugh again. I feel so much anger that you had to die such a violent death from someone you trusted. You should have been allowed to live to enrich the lives of all those you had touched.

When I came home from VA I would sit in the house and cry some more. It was like being struck by a lightning bolt and being blown into a million pieces. It was as if a hole had been ripped in me, as if all my skin had been seared with flames. Every cell in my being was rearranged. You were part of me and now you had been fiercely torn from my soul. How was I ever going to heal? Would I ever smile again? I used to go to work and cry while I was working. I didn't know if the tears would ever stop.

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Eventually the tears would stop for short times, but they always come back. They still do. I can be going about my day and some small thing will trigger a memory of you and I will start to cry. Just as it takes an enormous amount of time to heal seared skin, it will take as long and maybe longer to heal my seared soul. The violence that took you from me is not a onetime act of violence. It has been repeated and affected me every day since.

After this first happened I couldn't work. Some days I would just have to go home. I would go to work but I was not able to function. I have had to see a counselor to help me rearrange my life. Some of my close friends have gone because they don't understand the changes. I still have days when you are with me and I am not able to function. This act of violence will never be silenced. It is repeated in my head almost every day. My sleep at night is restless. My dreams are frequently riddled with images of you and your last moments; I wake up many times a night and often have trouble returning to sleep. I always feared that this day might come.

Jane, I hope that your death will not be in vain, that Jacquinda and others may learn from this tragedy. You did not deserve to meet such a violent end. Having to come here and speak to the court about this has brought it to the surface and renewed the pain that had started to heal. My wounds are open again and I am not sure if they will ever close.

**This statement was first published in the Summer 2009 Newsletter of Survivors of Homicide, Inc.*

It is shared with the permission of Nancy McAlley.

National 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.

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

<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>

Child Abuse

Stop It Now! (sexual abuse)

888-PREVENT

www.stopitnow.org/

Clery Center for Security on Campus

Office: (484) 580-8754

www.clerycenter.org/

Drunk Driving

MADD Victim/Survivor Helpline

877-MADD-HELP (623-3435)

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 enter
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/](http://online.rainn.org/) (online hotline)