

Advocates for Survivor Accessibility (A.S.A.) Information Packet

INTRODUCTION

The **Central MN Sexual Assault Center (CMSAC)** is coordinating “*Advocates for Survivor Accessibility or A.S.A.*” meetings to engage our local Saint Cloud area community in a conversation about making crime victim services more accessible to survivors of sexual assault.

Research tells us that people with disabilities experience violence – *including rape and sexual assault* – at rates **three times higher than people without disabilities** (Harrell, 2008-2010).

Historically, people with disabilities have faced barriers to getting much needed services. Many of these barriers still exist and make it hard for people with disabilities to reach the services they need. Some of these barriers include – communication, physical, programmatic, and attitudinal among others. These barriers contribute to higher rates of repeat victimization among people who have a disability (Smith, Harrell, Smith, & Demyan, 2016).

Coordinated community crime victim responses to sexual assault is a service that is often hard to reach for survivors who have a disability. Often times, when they do reach these services, the efficacy or ability for crime victim service providers to provide meaningful and accessible services, is well intended however, sometimes limited.

CMSAC has been a community partner working to abolish sexual violence in its entirety for more than 30 years. As a local crime victim service provider, CMSAC, A.S.A. and sexual assault crisis centers across the country are actively working to reduce barriers and improve their capacity to reach and serve survivors who have a disability. We look to survivors who have a disability and other valued service providers and community members to inform accessibility of services, as they are the consumers of said services.

We need your help to improve coordination of community crime victim responses to sexual assault.

DEFINITIONS

Self-Advocate: A person who lives with a disability who advocates for positive change/awareness around disability issues.

Advocates for Survivor Accessibility: A group of interested people, with or without disabilities, who are interested in increasing accessibility of coordinated community crime victim service provider responses to sexual assault via meetings, conversations, and community outreach.

Crime Victim: Any person who has been victimized by crime, in this case, forms of sexual violence or sexual assault.

Crime Victim Service Providers: Agencies and service providers who work with crime victims. In the case of sexual assault, this typically includes Law Enforcement Agencies/Offices, County Attorney Offices, Sexual Assault Crisis Agencies like CMSAC, Local Courts, and Hospitals.

Disability Service Providers: Agencies who provide services to people who have a disability. This can include, but is not limited to: Mental Health Service Providers, Independent Living Service Providers, County Disability Waiver Social Workers, County Case Managers, Adult Protection Services, Group Homes & Staff, Adult Foster Care Providers, Rehabilitative Counselors/Service Providers, and more.

Advocate: A person who acts on behalf of/empowers others. In this case, someone who is interested in the issues facing survivors of sexual assault who have disabilities and wants to raise awareness of said issues and work in a team to reduce barriers faced by survivors who have a disability.

Sexual Assault/Sexual Violence: Any sexual contact made against someone without their consent. This can include, but is not limited to: rape, sexual assault of all forms, unwanted sexual comments/gestures, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, sexual exploitation by professionals, involvement in the sex industry, date/acquaintance rape, incest and others.

Coordinated Community Crime Victim Service Provider Response to Sexual Assault: An organized response among community crime victim service providers for people who have experienced sexual assault. Usually, this response is coordinated over the length of time that the survivor is involved in the “system”

process for a sexual assault case. This can vary greatly depending on the survivor's needs and case details.

ADVOCATES FOR SURVIVOR ACCESSIBILITY/ A.S.A. GOAL STATEMENT

It is the A.S.A. goal to formally reduce barriers and improve efficacy for/with survivors of sexual assault who have a disability in the coordinated community crime victim service provider response to sexual assault by:

- Talking about and creating accessible policy and procedures that affect the service response toward survivors who have a disability.
- Talking about professional/personal experiences of positive/negative coordinated community crime victim service provider responses to sexual assault to inform accessible services.
- Talking about and getting education on oppression/discrimination of people with disabilities to inform positive change in community crime victim service provider response to sexual assault.
- Advising crime victim service providers and disability service providers on service collaboration/implementation to improve accessibility and coordination of responses for survivors who have a disability.
- Other necessary group duties to achieve A.S.A. goal statement as agreed upon by the group.

ADVOCATES FOR SURVIVOR ACCESSIBILITY GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

- ❖ No cost to be an advisory group member of A.S.A.
- ❖ Minimal Time Commitment – One Meeting Per Month Starting September 2016 thru (Will Be Determined)
- ❖ Accessible Meeting Place at Central MN Sexual Assault Center

- ❖ Convenient Time of Meetings: Thursday Mornings at 10:30am for 1.5 Hours (Just before lunch!)
- ❖ No Previous Experience Necessary
- ❖ PCAs/Support People Are Welcomed and Encouraged to Join Self-Advocates If Needed

REFERENCES

Smith, N., Harrell, S., Smith, J., & Demyan, A. (2016, July 4). *Cultivating Evaluation Capacity: A Guide for Programs Addressing Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence*. Retrieved from VERA Institute of Justice: <http://www.vera.org/project/cultivating-evaluation-capacity-sexual-domestic-violence-guide>

E. Harrell, "Crimes Against Persons with Disabilities, 2008-2010 – Statistical Tables," *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, last modified February 25, 2014, <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd10st.pdf> (accessed July 4th, 2016).

Questions, Comments, Concerns or for More Information:

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