

## **Successfully Addressing both Sexual Assault (SA) and Domestic Violence (DV) within a Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**

Many CCR teams are “dual” – meaning they address issues related to both sexual assault and domestic violence. It can be challenging to hold both issues in equal regard, but there are ways that teams have been successful in doing so. This section of the Toolkit will highlight some challenges and solutions with regard to addressing both issues equitably in the context of CCRs.

### **Benefits of addressing both SA and DV in a CCR context include the following:**

- In rural areas many of the same people are at the table
- Combined resources can help with programming and overhead costs
- If done well it can create community wide social change

### **Concerns of addressing both SA and DV in a CCR context include the following:**

- There may not be parity between both issues
  - Addressing sexual assault can be hard because of shame and myths (victim blaming).
  - There may not be an understanding of the commonalities and differences between sexual assault and domestic violence
  - It can be challenging to address issues connected to sexual violence that are relatively mainstream (e.g. pornography, strip clubs)
  - Underreporting can lead to the assumption that sexual assault is not happening in their communities
- Some dual DV and SA agencies may have only one advocate available to attend meetings that is responsible for addressing both SA and DV concerns
  - Is it possible for one advocate to represent both issues well?
  - Even if a sexual assault advocate is at the table, the person may feel silenced or unsupported if they are the lone person representing both issues
- Systemically oppressed populations (e.g. persons of color, LGBTQ identified individuals, persons with disabilities, etc.) may be ignored
- Sexual assault may not be addressed in communities that do not have a sexual assault agency
- Communities may have an outreach office that provides services; however, resources may be limited
- Communities may have a dual SA/DV program that does not address both issues equitably

### **How to have a successful CCR that addresses both SA and DV:**

- Learn from sexual assault and domestic violence survivors about what needs exist in the community
- Make a commitment to duality for SA and DV
- Dedicate equal time, funds, staffing and energy to both DV and SA
  - Events (e.g. plan something for both Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month)

- Data collection
- Trainings
- Developing/gathering resources
- Developing best practices
- Media/policy
- Learn about the commonalities and differences between sexual assault and domestic violence
  - Think about the commonalities and areas where it makes sense to work together
    - Relationship violence (sexual assault within domestic violence)
    - Power, control and entitlement
    - Connection of oppressions
  - Think about the differences and how it might be best to approach these differences
    - Male victims
    - Victims with disabilities
    - Older adult victims
    - Sex trade/trafficking/brokered marriages
    - Child sexual abuse/incest/witnessing abuse
    - Teen victims
    - Exploitation by professionals
    - Stranger assault
    - Impact of sexual assault myths (e.g. she shouldn't have been drinking)
    - Impact of domestic violence myths (e.g. if it was a problem she would leave)
- Establish trust by respecting the equal importance of both issues
- Have equal representation at the table from both the sexual assault and domestic violence fields
  - Encourage dual SA/DV programs to commit to sending both a sexual assault and a domestic violence advocate to meetings
  - If there are stand-alone programs in the community, invite both to the table
  - Invite other community partners that are interested in sexual assault issues or domestic violence issues to the table
- Create an official name for the CCR that indicates that the CCR is working on both sexual assault and domestic violence issues
- Create a mission and vision statement for the CCR that reflects a commitment to end both sexual assault and domestic violence
- Support sexual assault and domestic violence partners to develop their own identities (with media/community groups/general public)
  - Define their own goals and direction
- Look for individual funding streams for SA and DV work
  - Do not change program needs to reflect funding requirements to fit into a DV mold when trying to do SA work and vice versa
- Promote DV and SA equally
- Educate others on different prevention and intervention approaches of DV/SA advocates
- For communities that have separate CCRs for SA and DV, find ways to collaborate on

- commonalities, stay informed of each other's activities, and do cross training and education
- For communities that have a DV CCR and no SA services, give SA issues a place at the table; provide training and education on sexual assault, and bring in community leaders that are interested in addressing sexual assault

While this is not an exhaustive list of all the ways in which you can make a strong commitment to duality in your CCR, we hope that this section will generate opportunities for discussion within your team. Often these discussions do not occur, resulting in either sexual assault or domestic violence overshadowing the other. Opening the door to dialogue about the challenges can plant the seed for real solutions to emerge.