CENTERING VICTIM SERVICES IN A CAMPUS COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM

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CENTERING VICTIM SERVICES IN A CAMPUS COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM

Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) have been developing their response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking (DVSAS) for many years. Significant attention has been paid to specific elements of the IHE conduct and adjudication process, safety protocols, and prevention programming, which were initially driven by a need to help students, but also to comply with federal laws. While Victim Services is included within the process, resources are often focused on a small number of individual advocates or community partners, who are asked to shoulder the responsibility of awareness, prevention, and survivor resource-sharing. While traditional efforts are targeted to ensure campus compliance, this tool encourages IHEs to pause, evaluate and expand their Victim Service systems.

Coordinated Community Response Teams (CCRTs) are an ideal way to approach how an IHE prevents and responds to DVSAS.[1] A CCRT is a multidisciplinary team of campus and community partners who meet regularly to assess, plan, monitor, and evaluate campus prevention and response efforts within the context of their institution. CCRTs are designed to be broad and inclusive. They mirror the diverse, multidisciplinary groups of administrators, faculty, IHE-based direct services staff, community partner organizations, and students to envision equitable, trauma-informed[2], culturally relevant, and intersectional systems. CCRTs create the opportunity to center campus survivors[3] experiences and build comprehensive Victim Services systems that meet survivors' critical and unique needs.

CCRTs should understand the impact of trauma on the campus community, and this expertise should be reflected in its members' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This may include attending to diverse cultural experiences of trauma and providing culturally relevant and linguistically[4] appropriate services particularly at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Community Colleges, Tribal Colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

This guide is intended to assist CCRTs in expanding their Victim Services mindset and building a collective culture of support for campus survivors. Other companion products referenced within can provide a deeper understanding of the concepts discussed.

THE APPROACH

OVW promotes a survivor-centered approach to addressing comprehensive prevention and response to DVSAS. The survivor-centered approach is a philosophy that places the needs of survivors at the center of all decision-making, endorses policies and programs that empower survivors to make their own choices for adjudication and recovery, and emphasizes survivors' rights to confidentiality. In a survivor-centered approach, survivors have the fundamental right to be treated with respect, to be heard, to be free of attitudes or policies that blame them for the abuse they have suffered, and have the autonomy to choose whether and how they will engage with systems of response. A survivor-centered approach also recognizes that individuals are unique. Their gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic class, and legal status, among other factors, shape the experiences of survivors and consequently a survivor-centered approach uses an intersectional lens to understand and respond to victimization. Finally, not all survivors respond to trauma in the same way, and policies and institutional practices must be trauma-informed to account for the diverse presentations of survivors. In short, a survivor-centered approach means that regardless of which institutional role we may serve in relation to preventing or responding to DVSAS, the needs of survivors are understood and prioritized.[4]

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EXPANDING THE VICTIM SERVICES MINDSET

Developing a Victim Services system starts with centering those who have experienced harm and/or violence at an IHE. When survivors' experiences are considered first – what needs they have and how they will interact with other systems – it becomes easier to fill gaps that benefit both survivors and the process.

Institutions committed to incorporating a Victim Services mindset must embrace the belief that hiring advocates alone will not fully meet the need for a comprehensive, trauma-informed approach to DVSAS. A Victim Services mindset understands that everyone at an IHE is included in preventing and responding to DVSAS.

Survivors will likely need a wide range of resources and services, and CCRTs are encouraged to think beyond crisis support, and also healing-centered support for the whole person. CCRTs are an opportunity for IHEs to proactively develop training and partnerships to address the wide range of survivor needs, such as language access, services for survivors with disabilities, culturally specific services, housing, and relocation support, academic and financial assistance, legal assistance, and spiritual counseling. By taking a survivor-centered approach, CCRTs can acknowledge the disconnection trauma brings to survivors, and promote healing by reconnecting survivors to their communities. CCRTs can deepen partnerships with culturally

For an example of a campus-based holistic healing program, see Holistic Healing Transforming Trauma at the University of California Irvine (UCI) CARE Office:

The UCI CARE Office recognizes that healing is not limited to one modality and values all forms of healing. UCI CARE's Holistic Healing programs create transformative and nurturing spaces in which students who have experienced trauma can find safety, connection, and support. We offer a variety of holistic programs designed to provide restorative experiences that facilitate opportunities for reconnection to the self – addressing the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual effects of traumatic experiences.

See more at https://care.uci.edu/services/holistic-healing.html

specific organizations and campus departments/organizations to contemplate what healing looks like when considering the survivor holistically. These resources may consider healing through community-based restorative practices, mindfulness or other mind-body healing programs, community cooking and gathering for meals, or celebrating through a group or community ritual.

This requires a CCRT to invest in understanding and providing resources for all campus survivors, with particular attention to communities represented in their unique campus context. CCRTs should incorporate an intersectional framework[5] into their evaluation and structure. This can be accomplished by building the capacity of their members, both through a shared understanding of what an intersectional approach means as well as cross-training campus communities to build capacity and skills to respond, engage, and develop support networks for diverse communities and identities. The intersectional framework should also be reflected in the CCRT's structure by committing to creating strong boundaries for communication, training the group on conflict resolution, and processes for onboarding and offboarding members. These trauma-informed, intersectional beliefs should be reflected in the CCRT's mission and values statements.[6]

MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

We are leaders, allies, educators, and representatives of the University of Illinois community who work together to direct innovative approaches to preventing and responding to sexual misconduct for the benefit of all in our community. We center those who are most vulnerable, in order to create a community in which all people have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in an environment that is safe and equitable and which upholds the human dignity of each person.

Loyola University, Chicago

LUC's CCRT brings together students, staff, and faculty to create a campus culture where gender-based violence of any kind, specifically domestic/dating violence, sexual misconduct, and stalking is not tolerated. Through our commitment to education, training, increased accessibility to services, and promotion of accountability and justice – our diverse campus community is safer and more supportive to survivors.

VALUE STATEMENT EXAMPLES

Reinhardt University CCRT Values Statement

The work of the CCRT will be informed and guided by our beliefs and commitment to:

- Transformation: We value being transformative and moving forward to address issues of interpersonal violence.
- Accountability: We agree to be active participants in this work and value being accountable to each other, to victims/survivors, to the campus, and to the community.
- Skilled: We value having competency and being experts in our field, all of which lead to best practices in response to interpersonal violence on the micro, mezzo, and macro level.
- Safety: We value safety for victims/survivors of interpersonal violence, safety for campus and community members, and safety during our work to reduce interpersonal violence.
- Evidence-based: We provide intervention and prevention services that are rooted in evidence-based practice. In using evidence-based practices, we strive to provide comprehensive and effective responses to sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.
- Trauma-informed: We pledge to provide a non-judgmental approach, meeting the person where they are. We will strive above all else to do no harm in an effort to avoid re-traumatization to all those involved.
- Community and Person-centered: We value the importance of an inclusive, culturally responsive and safe community that fosters individual voice and sharing of experiences.

William Paterson University CCRT Values Statement

Our work will be guided and informed by our beliefs and commitments to:

- Mission and purpose - we strive for continuous improvement toward ending gender-based violence.
- Inclusiveness - we respect people, value diversity, and are committed to equality.
- Compassion - we care about people and are committed to ensuring that all are treated with dignity and fairness.
- Welfare - we are dedicated to action and decisions that support safety and well-being for all.
- Participation - we value and recognize the contribution of all members of our campus and community.
- Joint effort - we support a culture of teamwork and collaboration.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

Creating a trauma-informed, intersectional culture of support for DVSAS survivors includes systems that provide choice, confidentiality, and accurate representation of survivor voices.

1. PROVIDING SURVIVORS WITH CHOICE

DVSAS survivors are confronted with a variety of decisions and often face many barriers. A survivor-centered systemic approach understands the distinction between the process of making a decision and having choices, which incorporates ideas of preference, opportunity, and the power to choose[7]. Each survivor is unique and brings experiences and identities that must be considered. Providing a comprehensive Victim Services program at an IHE is much more than considering what support services a survivor can access. Survivor choice extends to reporting options, charting their own healing path, and accessing institutional employees or community providers that may or may not be members of the CCRT. As CCRTs review current response protocols, they should consider whether survivor choice is reflected in each step.

For instance, a CCRT driven by survivor choice would provide options for:

- services offered both on campus and in the community,
- a choice about whether and where to access counseling with a list of campus and community trauma-informed therapists that reflect diverse identities, areas of specialization, insurance/payment options, and
- a choice of whether to pursue accountability measures including an IHE conduct process, civil processes, and/or within the criminal justice system.

In creating a comprehensive, trauma-informed system, CCRTs should evaluate how to create an ongoing capacity-building process for IHE and community stakeholders. Capacity building should include training to raise awareness, increase knowledge, and build skills. More than a plan to educate students, CCRTs need to train administrators, faculty, and staff to respond to and support survivors within the context of their role. Further, CCRTs often focus on training athletics, sorority and fraternity life, and residence life but training should be expanded to include financial aid/scholarship officers, Deans, maintenance, cafeteria, and administrative support to holistically respond and support survivors. Any person that a survivor could turn to for help should understand the basic support structures, how to reply to a disclosure with compassion, and an understanding of what next steps to pursue. This may mean that the CCRT will recommend the IHE expand its pool of training or invest in new programming. CCRTs should evaluate current training curriculums, materials, and other communication structures (i.e. websites, apps) to ensure all institutional employees[8] are aware of their role in supporting campus survivors.

TRADITIONAL SUPPORT

Traditional support structures include medical, emotional, and safety resources available at both the IHE and within the community. These could include health care centers, local hospitals, counseling, culturally specific organizations, community advocacy agencies, rape crisis or domestic violence agencies, victim advocates at the IHE, financial aid resources, housing and food security resources, options for asking for changes to schedules at the IHE as well as civil legal advocacy. CCRTs are encouraged to expand support structures to include more choices for survivors.

Survivor-centered resources need to foster reconnection for survivors to their communities. This broad perspective encompasses the entire IHE community, including those departments that do not identify as providing services or do not realize they are serving survivors. CCRTs are an opportunity to evolve systems to include more representation and voices that often would be unexpected or ignored. Including diverse voices on a CCRT is a commitment to meaningful participation of those voices and a rebalancing of power dynamics at the IHE. CCRTs should include members from all major departments at the IHE to seek expertise, consider new ideas, and encourage a system-wide approach to DVSAS. CCRTs are encouraged to think beyond their current (yet critical) services and envision how to serve every population on campus. For example, IHEs could embed confidential advocates in departments outside the advocacy office, such as the multicultural student affairs, accessibility services office, or international students' offices to amplify these student communities. Another avenue to including diverse voices is expanding collaborations with community-based organizations.

By including more CCRT members from a variety of backgrounds, a CCRT can discover previously unknown providers and discuss appropriate ways to create new relationships. If a community provider has strict confidentiality protocols[9], the campus must work respectfully within those boundaries. Additionally, campuses should create Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)[10] with programs that realistically consider compensation for the valuable training or advocacy services provided, the accessibility needs of students, and transportation options to reach these services.

For those survivors seeking counseling, CCRTs should focus on providing several options. These systems could include a therapist or chaplain, which depending on the needs of the student, may need to be accessed off-campus. CCRTs should consider the diverse communities represented on-campus and assess what unique needs they may have. For example, if counseling gaps exist, CCRTs could commit resources to find community partners to fill those needs.

Ensuring survivor choice is a commitment to providing as many services as are relevant and reasonably possible. Some survivors may be reluctant to meet with a mental health counselor or may not identify as a sexual assault or domestic violence victim. These survivors may stil have important questions about their safety, the types of accommodations available, or differences between the criminal justice system and the conduct process at their institution. While mental health counselors play a critical role in a survivor's healing process, resource-sharing and process navigating are not typical functions of therapy. Campus-based advocates

are a critical resource for student survivors. CCRTs should evaluate whether the IHE could hire their own advocates and/or work in collaboration with community providers.[11] This way survivors who don't want to go off-campus, don't identify as a person requiring rape crisis or domestic violence shelter services, or an off-campus resource is not easily accessible, have options too.

For an example of facilitating peer support for student survivors, see Spelman College's Survivor Support Group.

Through the Violence Prevention and Intervention Program, Spelman College is able to increase existing services by establishing a psycho-educational support group. This group will offer student victims/survivors a confidential place to explore the impact of interpersonal violence and gain skills in their journey toward healing.

See more at https://www.spelman.edu/student-life/violence-prevention-intervention-program/survivor-support-group

2. CONFIDENTIALITY FOR SURVIVORS BEGINS WITH THE CCRT

In repeated studies[12], DVSAS survivors cite the need to control their own information in order to make informed decisions at their own pace. CCRTs that both understand and respect the privacy of survivors should honor those same principles with their own CCRT members.

With a broad range of members on the CCRT, including those both on and off-campus, it must be clear what privacy requirements each member has. For instance, if professions such as therapists, social workers, nurses, lawyers, and advocates who have statutory privilege (a state law providing the highest form of confidentiality) are represented on the CCRT, other CCRT members must be considerate and respectful of those members' inability to provide information that would be identifying. Additionally, for law enforcement and Title IX Coordinators who are CCRT members, there may be requirements to report information learned, which must be clear to all members. CCRTs are encouraged to define and discuss these roles and responsibilities often to remind members and encourage effective communication.

As the CCRT continues to evolve trauma-informed systems, they can model campus-wide communications based on CCRT privacy principles. For those departments that have confidentiality restrictions, such as mental health counseling, campus advocates, pastoral care, or the health center, the CCRT can evaluate and develop releases of information forms. Releases should be time-limited, streamlined, and consistent across campus so survivors who are engaging with multiple systems will be familiar with and have trust in the privacy systems.[13] For those campus employees who would require note-taking, such as an advocate or mental health therapist, CCRTs should evaluate how the notes are taken and protected. Survivors should feel secure that their private conversations will not be viewed by other administrators or general counsel. If there are instances where the institution feels it should have access to these notes, CCRTs can encourage informed consent of survivors before the records are seen.[14] CCRTs should evaluate intake and referral processes, as well as record retention, to determine what privacy protocols exist and how survivors can be made aware of what information is kept and what could be viewed under various circumstances.

For those IHEs without campus advocates, CCRTs should undertake an evaluation of whether an advocate could provide additional resources or fill any existing gaps. For those IHEs who include campus advocates who are not confidential, the CCRT could engage with the community to find students confidential services or create pathways to on-campus confidential advocacy.

3. SURVIVORS NEED THEIR VOICES ELEVATED ACCURATELY

Survivor voices and inclusion are essential to creating campus systems that meet their unique needs. A CCRT can work across many disciplines to ensure that campus survivor voices are incorporated. It is important to realize that survivors may already be represented on the CCRT but are not comfortable disclosing their own experiences. Survivors should be invited to serve on the CCRT as their perspectives on working within current systems are invaluable. Just as it is important to set boundaries regarding confidentiality for members of different professions, CCRTs should establish parameters for asking members questions who are open with their survivor stories. Modeling respectful behavior within the CCRT will make establishing similar boundaries outside the CCRT easier.

Campuses may consider seeking multiple voices through listening sessions and climate surveys.[15] A CCRT can evaluate whether any current research tools are adequate or require additional work. CCRTs must invest resources in ensuring survivors' voices are processed accurately. Preserving the integrity of the data collected ensures the information is used thoughtfully and respectfully when making decisions impacting campus systems and resources. For instance, CCRTs can provide skilled professionals to evaluate any climate survey questions to ensure they are inclusive and culturally appropriate. CCRTs can work to ensure research results are statistically valid and represent the opinions of diverse campus populations. If a CCRT asks for a listening session with survivors, they can require that any summaries from the listening session be reviewed by those survivors who spoke out to ensure statements attributed to them are accurate and represent their thoughts. Any research or

listening sessions undertaken must provide access for all students, including those with limited English proficiency, lack of home computers or Wi-Fi, interpretation services for hard of hearing and Deaf communities, and access accommodations for disabled communities. CCRTs play a critical role in survivor inclusion, from the CCRT itself to ensuring the accuracy of the information survivors provide about their experiences and perspectives.

4. SURVIVORS NEED INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Institutions must be accountable to their communities. When CCRT's center survivor experiences when creating systems, they take the first of many steps in earning the trust of survivors. When an institution violates that trust, the campus community needs to see that the IHE can be held accountable. CCRTs have an opportunity to balance institutional compliance efforts with centering the needs of survivors.

CCRTs can incorporate accountability mechanisms to ensure that the community and survivors can trust the campus systems they are asked to participate in. These mechanisms include making sure that victim services and compliance offices have similar levels of institutional power and are both included in relevant decision-making about survivor support, resources, and policies. Institutions can learn from their community through listening sessions and learning from survivor storytelling on social media or web-based platforms. Most importantly, IHEs can publicly set expectations with a transparent commitment to a diverse range of victim services, publishing annual reports detailing services, enforcing safety protocols, and strict privacy protections.

Expanding a campuses' victim services mindset and providing a culture of support is a critical role of a CCRT. Campus CCRTs are encouraged to analyze their current systems, learn and evolve within an intersectional framework, and foster new ideas to meet identified needs.

DEFINITIONS

Accessibility affords a person with a disability the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Culturally specific services are culturally relevant and linguistically specific services and resources that are created by and for specific cultural communities with emphasis on the voices and experiences of DVSAS campus survivors.

Victim/Survivor refers to people who have experienced harm, including dating/domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Intersectionality is a framework used to understand how aspects of a person's identity combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. This framework allows systems to ensure the needs of individuals and communities that face overlapping and intersecting forms of oppression are being met.

Victim Services can refer to many distinct professionals who respond to the well-being of a person, which could include the mental, physical, financial, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of campus survivors.

Although victim advocates and options counselors are trained to provide comprehensive support to meet many of these needs, other professionals may provide some victim services as well, including first responders, mental health professionals, peer advocates, Clergy, medical professionals, and criminal justice professionals.

END NOTES

1. For those campuses looking to create their first CCRT, we recommend the CCRT Toolkit (http://changingourcampus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12).

2. Trauma-Informed describes a program, organization, or system that realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. (SAMHSA's definition)

3. Office of Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to a Comprehensive Model state: "We recognize that different professions use diverse terminology to refer to those impacted by gender-based

violence. For instance, while many advocates prefer the terms survivor and perpetrator, law enforcement personnel may use terms such as victim and offender, and student conduct personnel may use terms such as complainant and respondent. In accordance with the survivor-centered approach, in this guide, we favor the term "survivor" as an empowering choice. Nonetheless, terminology may shift throughout this guide to reflect the diverse professionals who address this issue from multiple perspectives. It is the coming together of these key personnel that gives this model its strength, and we respect the right of each professional partner to use terminology that reflects their unique perspective and the significant role they play in addressing gender-based violence on campus." (Office of Violence Against Women, Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to Comprehensive Model, page 5 which can be accessed at http://changingourcampus.org/documents/FINAL-GBV-Comprehensive-Model-22117.pdf

4. Office of Violence Against Women, Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to Comprehensive Model, page 5 which can be accessed at http://changingourcampus.org/documents/FINAL-GBV-Comprehensive-Model-22117.pdf

5. For more information on intersectional frameworks within a CCRT, see pages 30-34 in the CCRT Toolkit.

6. For more information and examples of CCRT mission and value statements, see pages 20-24 of the CCRT Toolkit.

7. Suarez, C. (2018). *The power manual: How to master complex power dynamics*. New Society Publishers. https://cyndisuarez.com/my-book

8. CCRTs should consider what contractors are used at the IHE and how they can be included in training and skill-building exercises.

9. For more information on privilege and confidentiality, we recommend the "Privacy on Campus: A Workbook for Advocates" which can be accessed at https://victimrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Privacy-on-Campus-A-Workbook-for-Advocates.pdf. For more information on privilege and confidentiality, consider the VAWA Confidentiality Provision. These provisions may be applied to campus policies if there are no community-based organizations involved.

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ovw/legacy/2013/09/24/conf-acknowledgement.pdf

10. For a sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) see https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/1124411/download.

11. OVW Campus Grantees are encouraged to reach out to OVW Campus TA Providers for more customized help with structuring an advocacy program with community providers.

12. Klein, L.B. & Dunlap, Jill & Rizzo, Andrew. (2016) The Role of Campus-Based Advocacy and Prevention Professionals in Campus Culture Change. Michelle L. Munro-Kramer, Alexandra C. Dulin & Caroline Gaither (2017) What survivors want: Understanding the needs of sexual assault survivors, Journal of American College Health, 65:5, 297-305, DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2017.1312409

13. For a sample release of information form see the National Network to End Domestic Violence site at https://nnedv.org/mdocs-posts/client-limited-release-of-information-form-english/.

14. For more information, we recommend "Privacy on Campus: A Workbook for Advocates" which can be accessed at https://victimrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Privacy-on-Campus-A-Workbook-for-Advocates.pdf and the Safety Net Project's Confidentiality Toolkit which can be accessed at https://www.techsafety.org/confidentiality.

15. IHEs are encouraged to consider a variety of modalities to collect information including private, confidential, anonymous, verbal, and written.