

Trauma Informed Sexual Assault Investigation Training Curriculum

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Purpose of the Training Curriculum

The purpose of the training curriculum is to serve as a resource and assist instructors in creating and facilitating trainings on conducting trauma informed sexual assault investigations. This document provides guidance on relevant training content, suggested activities, facilitation strategies, and instructor talking points for each identified topic related to law enforcement response to sexual assault. Topic areas include:

- The realities of sexual assault
- The neurobiology of trauma
- Trauma informed victim interview methods
- Offender-focused investigative strategies
- Investigating drug/alcohol facilitated sexual assault cases

While the content in the training curriculum focuses on law enforcement response, the information is also useful for other disciplines that interact with the victims of sexual assault, such as advocates, prosecutors, and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs). As a result of the training content, law enforcement and those who engage with victims will have a better understanding of:

- How trauma impacts victim behavior and memory, and the implications for investigations.
- How to utilize trauma-informed interview techniques and offender-focused investigative strategies.

This knowledge will enable them to better support victims and hold offenders accountable.

Instructor Qualifications

The successful implementation of this curriculum requires experienced and skilled instructors who:

- Have experience training law enforcement and a basic understanding of sexual assault and the frequent co-occurring crimes, including domestic violence, stalking, and strangulation.
- Have an understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and how it impacts victim behavior, actions, and memory.
- Have credibility gained through their own experience investigating these crimes as a law enforcement officer.

It is encouraged for the instructor with a background in law enforcement to conduct the training with an advocate, prosecutor, or another in the criminal justice system to bring another

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perspective and different expertise and strengths to the training as well as model a multi-disciplinary response to sexual assault.

The training curriculum content contains complex topics such as sexual assault and the impacts of trauma. These topics have the possibility of being graphic and emotionally complicated, therefore the instructor(s) ought to be comfortable with these topics and potentially difficult conversations.

Using the Training Curriculum

The training curriculum is designed so that the length of the training can be adapted to different training needs. It can be divided, based on the modules, into short training blocks for the purpose of roll-call trainings or longer in-service training blocks, or combined for a full two-day training event that can be used at a training academy or for an agency member training.

The content included in the training curriculum is not intended to highlight all information available on law enforcement sexual assault response. Trainers should share their own experiences and knowledge throughout the training where appropriate and where indicated in the lesson plan and develop their own information on local/state laws, agency statistics, and community resources. Additionally, any lesson plan used should be updated with current national statistics and research before each training event; a list of suggested resources and organizations to obtain data from are included in the “Reference List”.

Although the training curriculum does provide content, facilitation strategies, and talking points, it is not intended for the instructor to use the guide’s language verbatim, instead the instructor should allow for some degree of flexibility based on their personal knowledge and participant questions and needs. The training curriculum includes examples of participant questions that may be asked and facilitation challenges that may arise, however, these examples are not comprehensive, and the intent is to show possible strategies for addressing them and similar challenges.

To answer participant questions and address other facilitation challenges, it is helpful for the instructor to read and watch all resources listed at the beginning of each lesson plan. The instructor is also encouraged to be familiar with the additional resources, including:

- [IACP’s Model Policy on Investigating Sexual Assaults](#)
- [IACP Balancing the Scales of Justice Webinar](#)
- [IACP Bringing Sexual Assault Offenders to Justice Roll-Call Video](#)
- [IACP Sexual Assault Incident Reports: Investigative Strategies](#)
- [IACP Sexual Assault Policy and Training Content Guidelines](#)

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- IACP supervisor report review checklists – [sexual assault](#), [domestic violence](#), [strangulation](#), [stalking](#), and [protection order violations](#)
- [Sexual Assault Kit Initiative \(SAKI\) The Neurobiology of Trauma: Webinar Series](#)

Additional IACP resources can be found here: www.theiacp.org/projects/police-response-to-violence-against-women-vaw.

Agencies holding a training event are also encouraged to provide additional trainings with community-based organizations they maintain partnerships with, such as victim service providers, culturally-specific organizations (serving populations based on race, sexual orientation, nationality, language, etc.), and mental health service providers.

Learning Philosophy and Adult Learning Principles

In keeping with adult learning principles, the modules each provide 3-5 learning objectives which are presented and reinforced through a variety of methods where participants will process the material together and on their own, such as lecture, PowerPoints, large and small group activities, and partnered work. This structure allows for individuals to process the material according to their learning style. It is recommended that the class size not exceed 60 participants to maximize participation.

Participants are also more likely to retain the information presented if they see its applicability to the work they do and/or their life. Therefore, it is important for the instructor to provide case studies and examples that are similar to those that the participants may encounter while on the job. This enables the participant to think about how they would apply the new knowledge in their work and investigations. Additionally, participants should be able to draw on and apply their own knowledge and experience to the training. The goal is for participants to be able to use the information and skills they learned, such as trauma-informed interviewing and offender-focused investigative techniques, following the training.

The instructor(s) is also encouraged to facilitate instead of lecture. This means focusing on how the participants engage with the material and allowing for the exchange of dialogue both between participants and between participants and the instructor, rather than focusing solely on telling the participants the information. Facilitation can especially be utilized during large group exercises and Q&A sessions. The instructor ought to be comfortable with and allow for silence to wait for the audience to respond to questions, rather than providing answers. This encourages participants to engage with the material and ask questions, and aids in creating a dialogue between audience members and the instructor wherein attendees can voice challenges they have with the material.

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Training Curriculum Content

1. Training Curriculum Introduction

2. Module 1 – Overcoming the Complexities of Sexual Violence: Understanding the Realities

- a. Lesson Plan - 1 hour of instruction
- b. PowerPoint - 23 slides

3. Module 2 – How Does Culture Influence the Communities We Serve?

It is recommended that this training module always be conducted as a foundation for the training participants.

- a. Lesson Plan - 1 hour of instruction
- b. PowerPoint - 30 slides

4. Module 3 – The Impact of Trauma: A Trauma-Informed Lens and Response

It is recommended that this training module always be conducted as a foundation for the training participants.

- a. Lesson Plan - 2 hours of instruction and a 15-minute break
- b. PowerPoint - 37 slides

5. Module 4 – Trauma Informed First Response – First Impression Matters

- a. Lesson Plan - 1 hour of instruction
- b. PowerPoint - 19 slides

6. Module 5 – Trauma Informed Victim Interview

It is recommended that this training module always be conducted as a foundation for the training participants.

- a. Lesson Plan - 2 hours of instruction and a 15-minute break
- b. PowerPoint - 27 slides

7. Module 6 – Perpetrator Realities and Investigative Strategies

- a. Lesson Plan - 2 hours of instruction and a 15-minute break
- b. PowerPoint - 27 slides

8. Module 7A – Alcohol and Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault Cases

This is to be used if Module 6 has recently been conducted with the same training participants.

- a. Lesson Plan - 1 hour of instruction
- b. PowerPoint - 31 slides

9. Module 7B – Perpetrator Realities and Alcohol and Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault Cases

This is to be used if Module 6 has not been recently conducted with the same training participants.

- a. Lesson Plan - 2 hours of instruction and a 15-minute break
- b. PowerPoint - 39 slides

10. Training Curriculum Reference List

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Training Curriculum Contributors

We would like to thank the following individuals for their significant contributions to this document:

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