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Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us for this webinar on language and report writing. My name is Julia Holtemeyer and I am a project manager at the International Association of Chiefs of Police focusing on the law enforcement response to violence against women.

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Before we get started today, I am going to thank OVW and also explain that while this is supported by the Office on Violence Against Women at the US. Department of Justice. This webinar does not reflect the views of OVW or DOJ, only those of us, the presenters.

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So, now, I will hand it over to our two presenters, Steve and Erin to introduce themselves.

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Hi, my name is Steve Belshaw, I am one of the Deputy Chiefs for the Salem Oregon Police Department.

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There are a number of Salems across this cross country, but I happen to live out on the West Coast in Salem, Oregon. I am just starting my 31st year in law enforcement as a detective supervisor and now deputy chief.

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So, I'm looking forward to spending some time with you today and about a very important topic.

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Hello, everyone. I also am in Oregon, and have had the pleasure of knowing Steve for somewhere north of his 20 or 31 years in law enforcement. I am currently an attorney in private practice focusing on representation of victims of violence. Prior to that, I was a prosecutor for just shy of 20 years. And, again, my focus was on domestic and sexual violence, and so my entire career in law enforcement has been around engaging with victims.

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And I look forward to, with Steve, talking to you today about report writing and the importance of our choice of language within report writing.

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And, as I said, when we talk about report writing, the, the language that we use, a lot of times, we really don't think about the impact it will have on the audience that is intended, as we talk about that.

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So this is just a brief little video of the importance of language.

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So, when we talk about report writing, it's one of the things that people don't pay attention to.

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If, if you're being honest, and I know some of you, watch some of those police shows, even dating back to the Gunsmoke days. with Marshall Dylan, you never saw Marshall Dylan, sit down and write a police report at the end of the shift.

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so it's one of the things that we don't talk about and we overlook sometimes, but it really is one of the most critical tasks for law enforcement. It really is our chance to make a difference in our community and make a difference in the lives of those those people that we're serving. The reports really can make a difference between justice and injustice.

4:11

If we accurately portray what happened, what the victim was facing, what the the actions of the suspect, or all of those kind of things, are really, really critical. And the filing of the cases, the prosecution of the cases and and the outcome of that case and making sure that the victim's voices heard.

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And so one of the things that we encourage, and when we're looking at report writing is write Each report, and each case as if the victim will not participate, Understand that a lot of the cases that we investigate are cases of homicide, where you can't interview the victim. You can't hear the victim side of the story, and yet we still successfully prosecute those cases and we successfully make sure that victims voices heard through a number of different needs. And so, if you report, if you approach each case and writing each report, as if the victim will not be there to participate and speak for themselves, then you're going to have a much better and much more thorough report as you move forward in the case.

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So, one of the things that we need to know is, what are the basics of report writing.

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So, one, is, know your audience, Know who you're talking to, who that report is directed towards, Know, the purpose of your report.

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What are you trying to convey, and what are you trying to make happen, based on your report.

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Use clear, concise, unbiased, descriptive words.

6:02

Things like, your opinion, are not important in a police report. We are going back again to the old days. It's just the facts we're gathering facts, or gathering the observations of what we can see, what we observe.

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And, so, putting those things in the report and avoid words that minimize or trivialize the events that just happened. Remember, For the most part, were talking to people on the worst day of their life.

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This is the worst thing that ever happened to most of the people that we're dealing with. So, we should not minimize or trivialize, what happened? We may have seen this before.

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We go to car accidents all the time. But for many of the people that we deal, this is, this is the first accident that they've ever been in. its a big deal.

And so, making sure that we understand that, and that we can communicate that and not not minimize the effect that has on the people that we're dealing with.

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So let's start with knowing your audience. So when you started as a, as a baby police officer, your audience was your FTO, your field training Officer, or your Sergeant.

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All you always thought about was I have to write this report and get it approved by that person. We didn't think bigger than that.

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It was just, like, I write the report, and I sit there anxiously While the, the FTO or the or the sergeant reads it and when he says it's OK, you take a deep breath, a sigh of relief and, and now, that means you can go home end the shift and you don't have to do more work. But really, your audience is much bigger than just that sergeant.

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So when we look at who is the audience for the police report, it is much bigger than that. So when you look at your report.

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Yes. You're trying to get it past your Sargeant. Yes, you're trying to get that approved.

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There is a much bigger audience for that police report. So the public and the media right, now, especially with some of the events that are going on, A public records requests are coming right and left of what did you do? What steps did you take the course of defense attorneys read your police report?

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If your cases a felony case, or if it needs further investigation, it's going to go to the detective.

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And then of course, the prosecutor is making their decision on whether they're going to file this case or whether they're not going to file a case. And so as we go on and Erin is going to talk to you more about what a prosecutor looks for a report.

And so those are things that are really important to us. If the case is assigned to not be adjudicated, but go to a probation officer, the probation officer needs to know the facts of the case and what kind of restrictions that they should put on the suspect.

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Of course, the advocate is looking at it to help with the victim.

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The judge reads it, and of course, the victim can request copies of the report. And so making sure that you accurately portray what the victim said is very important.

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Because it can be very difficult for victims to read the police report and feel like that's not what they said or doesn't accurately portray what they were telling you, so really making sure that you know who the audience is, and that you're addressing them.

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Then once we know who our audience is, then we have to look at what the purpose of our report is.

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So the purpose of our report is often that we have to accurately and thoroughly summarize the evidence, and the context of what was uncovered during the investigation. What did you find? What did you see? What steps did you take?

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And, again, those things are are very critical you've seen cases, that nationally have affected how we do business, how we collect evidence, how we handle DNA evidence, how we handle chain of custody

evidence. So making sure that you accurately summarize what you have seen and the steps that you take.

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Really help you be successful in the prosecution of the case, and it helps you

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Know what you're doing when you have to get on the stand. When I started as a detective and I got called out on my first homicide case. a Senior detective told me to make sure you take copious notes, Make sure that you write everything down where you found everything, not that it was in the Dresser. But what drawer in the Dresser?

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Are you kidding me? This is a homicide.

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I will never forget this.

11:23

Well, as time went on and I investigated more than one homicide, it became harder and harder to recall those details. And so I was very thankful to that, very smart detectives that told me to document everything, because these don't always go to trial in a very timely manner, and sometimes it could be a year to two years before your testifying about what you did at that few minutes at the crime scene.

And so, making sure that you, that, you know, those things, and you document that document the experience

Of all the parties.

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What did they feel?

12:05

And a lot of times, we don't like to talk to people about feelings, so that's that's That's not something that we talk about a lot. I often tell people at cops have 2 feelings, angry and sarcastic, and those are about the only two feelings we have.

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But those feelings are important, 'I felt like I was going to die', and 'I felt like he was going to kill me'. 'I felt like I was never going to see my children again' documenting those experiences of what they were feeling, what they saw. And all of those things are very critical part of the of the police report.

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Of course, describe the tools, the objects, the weapons, how they were used, what they were used for because, as we all know, things are not always used for what they were designed for. A lamp is designed to light a building.

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It's not designed to hit somebody up alongside the head, but that's how sometimes things get used and so making sure that you document those kinds of things and detail the experience. It doesn't minimize or trivialize it.

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When they say they felt that way, everybody feels things differently. Everybody experiences things differently. This is their case, it's their experience. It's not ours.

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And so we need to make sure that we accurately portray what the victim is telling us.

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If I could just underscore some of the things that, that you mentioned, and then leading into the next couple of slides.

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You know, I think we all know that good investigations don't solely just focus on, quote, unquote, the incident. Right, the thing for which law enforcement was called out to investigate. And so it follows that a good report.

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Like that good investigation is going to include elements that are not just the investigation.

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So when we look at those bullet points, unpacking the language a little bit, because I think the language in this particular bullet point is an example of how language is really important when we choose it, to summarize both the evidence and the context uncovered in the investigation, right?

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So it's not just the incident, it's not just what happened, but it's the before and after, it's the catalyst and the impact that we're really interested in. And as a prosecutor was especially important in trying to understand the why sometimes, in terms of documenting the experience. I love that the word experience is used in the slide. So, again, it's not just what happened, but it's also the thoughts and feelings, and the impact on all of the parties involved, because that, in and of itself, can be evidence of what happened, or why something happened. The description of, as you said, the tools, objects, and weapons, and we're going to talk throughout the course of this webinar about language. But often what a victim thinks of as a weapon may not necessarily be what we might think of as a weapon.

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And so, allowing the victim without you or I making assumptions about what the weapon is that allowing that person to describe to you what it was that they perceive to be the tool or object or a weapon that created that coercive situation or that fear or intimidation. And, again, as you said, detailing the experience in ways that don't minimize or trivialize it. And I have found that part of how we do that is understanding that each of us and bring to a situation a perspective or lens.

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And sometimes we need to get out of our own way, engage with people in an empathetic way, and that results in less editorializing and less minimizing in a report. And then, of course, the report has a huge impact on how prosecutors then receive information.

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What prosecutors want is a report that is, of course, accurate and thorough, but we want a report that is factual. And we want to report that is unimpeachable. So even that Editorializing, while inadvertent can be difficult and a challenge to overcome.

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And so some of the ways, an example of context and experiential information that we do see oftentimes is around perpetrators and victim.

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So on the next slide, what we see and it was really important to be captured into our report, is the perpetrator's behavior. So we were talking about context.

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It's important in a investigation and a report that captures the investigation that's not solely focused on the incident to look at the perpetrators behavior, the before and after. Of course, the Premeditation, if there is, the grooming, we use that term a lot with child abuse cases with offenders that perpetrated against adults sometimes we use the word organizing. What did the person do to create the vulnerable situation? What did the person do to take advantage of existing vulnerabilities of the victim?

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What did the person do to create the coercive atmosphere, or it comes threatening or forced moved towards the victim?

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And then, as to the victim, of course, we want to look at the reactions of the victim before, during, and after the assault.

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Any evidence of trauma, any observations of the victim, not just solely on what was done to them.

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But also, the senses that the victim perceived through, that fill in that context. That's so important, I'm sure law enforcement officers have heard kind of ad nauseum. Prosecutors say, you know, we need information to paint that picture. Right? Because, of course, anybody who is a part of the incident itself is not going to be on the jury, is not going to be a judge.

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So we need information from the people who were there that is really visceral.

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And some of that really visceral information comes from victim telling officers about what they saw, what they smelled, what, what, what it tasted like in the moment that this horrible thing was being done to them, what they heard, Right?

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And what they ta..., and what was, and what the touching felt like.

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So oftentimes, I think the way in which we've traditionally been taught who, what, where, why, and how, forget those really important sensory types of information as a prosecutor is kind of, know, that, the bread and butter. It's what we love, love, love to get.

19:47

You were talking about how, you know, knowing your audience of a police report really important. And that is absolutely true. I have started to police officers time and time again. If you get me a really Good police report, I can do a much better job of keeping this case out of trial of keeping this case out of court.

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Because the defense attorneys are going to know that this is an accurate, thorough, actual, nearly unimpeachable report. And, there's just, very rarely, a defense attorney who wants to bring that type of a report, and that type of an officer, who has written the report into court. Not to say that it doesn't happen, but, it's, it's uncommon.

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And then, in addition to the five senses, we have what we call the sixth sense.

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Which is, it's, you know, it's clearly as important. And it might even be the most important.

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Because And we're going to talk, again, about this when we talk about language. But how this can inform your ability to really describe in your report what was happening and it's about what the victim

thought and felt, and feared and not only the victim, but also witnesses. I mean, certainly, we know that people who witness terrible events can also be deeply impacted, and then, of course, the victim's condition. The physical and emotional.

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Another way. I'm sorry, Steve, are you going to say something?

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Yeah, so while we're talking about what victims felt and feared, so let's talk a little bit about.

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So when we, as officers, a lot of times are involved in incidents where we use force and we have to be able to document what we felt, what we feared.

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And a lot of that is based on our history or our training, our past contacts with people in similar situations.

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Yeah. A lot of times in reports, we avoid the history.

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When a victim starts telling us about what happened last week, what happened two weeks ago or when you talk about what they fear might happen because it's happened in the past and this is what's going to happen. So.

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Can you talk a little bit about from a prosecutor's point of view?

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If having that history while it takes time, yet how valuable that is towards the prosecution's case.

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Absolutely and actually that's a segue into the next slide around safety and accountability.

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There are so many ways that having historical information around an abusive relationship and I shouldn't I should actually check myself because that's not the best choice of words.

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I should say about the abuse that's been perpetrated on the victim in this relationship by the perpetrator.

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Depending upon the state where you're in, we're in Oregon. And we have historically been able to, at times, get that historical information into court, which is amazing, because unfortunately the truth that juries and judges more often tend to believe that an incident of abuse happened.

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If other incidences of abuse are brought in to court, it's also true that if you have other historical information, it's much less likely that it's actually going to go to trial, because that's very, very damaging. And Defense Attorneys. And defendants understand that. It also, though, as this slide, illustrates, really helped us to provide the right resources for victims. Every victim comes into the criminal justice system with a very unique background, and a need for resources. And understanding the full picture of what the person has been made to suffer, helped us to understand what services and resources they need and that we might be able to provide to them.

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Additionally, it helps us to understand what the picture of safety or risk looks like for this person, so that as prosecutors, we can go into court and we can argue around bail or relief. And it also helps, of course, the Court, because the Court wants to be fully informed when they're making that decision. Really, from every standpoint, from pre arrest all the way through conviction and sentencing, the more information, the better.

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If I understand this person has a history against this person, and, or other people, by the way, which is as important to me as the prosecutor, then I can make an argument around the sentence that shouldn't be imposed on the person that truly reflects this person's behavior.

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Yeah.

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A lot of times, and this is, most people, I talk to them, kinda relate to this. You think about the last time you had a disagreement with your significant other.

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It wasn't the event of that day when you just finally had enough.

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And it was the events of the last two weeks or three weeks or four weeks, it, you know, has been building up to this.

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So, if someone just said, Really, you got this angry over this little thing.

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It doesn't make sense, but when you start looking at what has been going on or what has been building up to that, then that really gives you a much clearer picture of what's going on in that relationship.

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So, we talk about that And, and just having that conversation.

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you and I have talked before about my lightbulb moment was, I don't know how many calls I went on and where you develop your probable cause and arrest of the suspect.

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And the victim says, I need the car keys out of this pocket before he leaves.

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When it finally dawned on me, if I got arrested, my wife doesn't need car keys out of my pocket.

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She has their own set of car keys, but in these relationships, theirs, one set of car keys.

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And so, when you start talking and learning that history about, I have to ask for the car keys.

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I have to ask for the credit card, I have to ask for these, these things, then it gives you a much clearer picture.

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While the suspect will try and make and talk to you and make use.

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Think that you are in a similar relationship as them, you quickly can realize that it's not the same and this.

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Controlling behavior exists through that, and that can really serve as evidence.

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And, know, we started writing, I started putting in my report success, but there was only one set of car keys and the suspect kept him in his pocket, that the prosecutors love information like that.

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Absolutely. And it also helps to understand that there is a real probability that the victim will not be able to participate in the criminal justice system, even if they start out by wanting to.

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Because if they're in this sort of labyrinth of abuse and have been for some time, it's, I look at it like a cobweb, right? It's really difficult to extricate yourself from that. With all the external pressures that you know, and that all of you watching this know based on your experience with domestic violence it's really hard for victims to extricate themselves.

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For many, many reasons, not the least of which is there sort of it could be coexisting sphere of the perpetrator and also affection or love for the perpetrator.

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And so you know, to your point earlier, in writing a report, were you that's evidenced based. And not necessarily on the need for the victim Is super important as a prosecutor?

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I know, that's how I always prepared my cases, understanding that there was a real likelihood that the victim would not be able to participate, notice I don't think she was on co-operative and we're going to talk about that.

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Having a good report that's accurate and thorough really helped me to do that to prepare that way.

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I think the next one is to use clear, concise, unbiased, and descriptive words. Steve, you were going to take us through that?

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Yeah, OK.

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We want to make sure that we accurately portray the events of this happen. So we have an example of a report we've all made traffic stops multiple times.

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And so, well, you want to make sure that you are accurately portraying what's going on. There is

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the possibility for overkill.

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So making sure, you know, reporting officer initiated my overhead, visual attention, gathering devices. try and talk in plain English so that people can understand.

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I use in my car, activated, my overhead lights, car pulled over and try and avoid using.

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No, acronyms, and Those kinds of things. So just be objective.

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Of course, if you can, I know this is sometimes a department decision, but if you can write in the first person, It's much clearer. I did this. I did that versus the reporter observed this. So if you can, write in first person.

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tell the story.

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Tell where you started. Tell what you did next. Tell what you did next. Don't jump around. Just include the details of the event. Who did you talk to, who to talk to? First? what did they say?

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Use the language that the victims and the suspects and witnesses use.

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If you try and summarize, add or change what they're saying, it's not gonna, when they get on the stand and they use different language. That's an opportunity for defense attorney to say that's not what she told the officer, That's not what She told the detective.

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So use quotes if you can help what they're saying. What they were feeling?

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What they saw, what people said to them all of those different kinds of things, but make sure that you're accurately portrayed that our job is not to write a novel, it's a job. Our job is to report the facts. So listen to what they're telling you. And as best, you can accurately capture that in their words as much as possible.

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Have detailed descriptions of the assault locations where it happened. So again, the example I used when I was working my first homicide and I was I was seizing things out of his dresser where the detective said, Don't say you got it as a dresser.

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But what dresser drawer did you get it out and where it was a dresser located in the room?

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So, if the assault happened in a field where in the field did it happen, you might have to find that place again.

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So, make sure that people understand that, if the assault happened in a room, did it happen in the corner of the room? Did it happen in order opposite the doorway? So the suspect was standing between the victim and the door.

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So make sure that you have detailed descriptions of where, where the, the, the assault happened, what the injuries, or what acts or committed. And again, what not only what acts are committed, what the suspect said, what commands were given, all of those kinds of things.

33:00

So, again, telling, asking the victim: What: tell me what you remember about the assault. What you remember about the suspect, What can you tell me about what they look like, all of those kinds of things, to just keep that conversation going, and letting victims know that it's OK to say, I don't remember. I'm not sure.

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Because you don't want them to make up an answer to try.

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And please, you get the answer, but prefacing those questions by what do you remember? What can you tell me about those things? It's very, very helpful in getting you an accurate description of what happened to that victim.

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So as we said, don't editorialize.

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Don't offer opinion, don't do victim blaming statements.

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And so we'll we'll talk some more about the victim blaming statements, but they're things that you can say that just

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Put a victim on the defensive.

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If you think about, the last time your supervisor came to you, and started a conversation with the word, why, as they looked at you, that's a word that puts us on the defensive, because you feel like you're being questioned. Why, you know, the question could be, Why is it raining outside, but starting? The question was, Why just kind of puts us on, on the defensive? So, making sure that you understand that and not asking victims why questions. Tell me more about that.

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So.

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Avoid vague, quantitative words like it happened lots of times that happened many times. That happened multiple times. You know, try and pin that down. Did it happen more than once to happen less than 10 times, did it happen?

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So, try not do those vague descriptions of the events that happen. Avoid police jargon.

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We, we we get used to talking to each other, and people don't understand what we're talking about. So try and talking in plain English.

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And again, avoiding opinions are subjective terms of the victim acted strange, They seemed to upset. They see their behavior was not normal. Well, what's normal behavior on the worst day of your life? I'm not sure what that is.

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Thinking about what you could say, instead of a victim seemed upset, the victim was crying, the victim's eyes were bloodshot and

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Those kinds of things are going to be your observations, not your opinions.

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Of course, we want to avoid consensual language, especially at sexual assault cases.

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So things that make it seem like there was mutual participation or participation by the victim, so, for example, made love, or had sexual intercourse, or engaged in sexual intercourse. years ago in Washington, DC They had a guy that was climbing in Windows, and getting embedded with women in the middle of the night, and they called him a Cuddler.

36:47

And it's, like, that makes it sound flirtatious or innocent. And if a guy is climbing in getting imbed, a strange person is getting in bed with women in the middle of the night.

37:04

That's not cuddling, and we need to call it what it is. And so, make sure that we're accurately and portraying what the events, where that happened, Calling it by the Criminal Code that describes it, and don't minimize what happened to victims, because, let's say, victims don't want to report, is, when we don't, they feel like we're not taking them seriously.

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And, don't clean up the language by the victim this, the victims are angry, and upset, and traumatized by this. And so, they have a right to, to speak their feelings, and so, that, it's our job to, again, capture what they're feeling about, what happened to them?

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And, again, we're dealing with people, for the most part, during a really, really, bad time in their life, And we know, we signed up to do this job to help people, and to make a difference, And these are chances to do that.

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And we should make sure that we're, We're up to that.

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That we're living up to what we said we wanted to do, and we swore that oath to become a police officer, and these chances to really make a difference, believing a victim, making them feel safe. And just listening to them and hearing what they have to say.

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All right, so, again.

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Physical descriptors. These are

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descriptions.

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We, we usually, We try and take pictures, but, there's always a chance that pictures could not be allowed in.

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And so, if we just say the victim was upset, and that's, always, say, in our org, and no pictures are getting in.

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We, we're not going to win that case. So, describing what the victim's demeanor was. they were crying, they were breathing quickly, they had their arms wrapped around their chest. They curled up in the fetal position. They wouldn't make eye contact. What their physical description is I can, we all had bruises so we know what bruises look like.

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If you're not offering a medical opinion it, you see bruises, You see red marks, you see scratches, you see torn clothing being able to describe what those, what, you're seeing you're trained observer and then you are there to capture and document that.

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Think about what nurses do when, when people are admitted to the OR that the, the physical exam that they go through, we can do this, a very similar thing of making sure that we document the victim from head to toe. What you're seeing, what your observations are.

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Only takes a few seconds to do that, but, but that can make a huge difference in the lives of these victims.

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You know, Steve, I have a former colleague in one of the DA's office. The district attorney's offices that I worked in, and she has to say about reports. The police officers, you know, I don't need you to be. and she JK Rowling, the author of Harry Potter, but insert your favorite author, Stephen King, or whomever it might be. They don't need you to be that person. I need you to be accurate, and I think flagging what you said a little bit earlier, which is just to say what it is say what happens And that will get the point across. And and just saying what it is or saying what happened can oftentimes necessitate really descriptive word because of the types of crimes that are being committed, necessitate those that type of language and that type of description.

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And so the examples that are put forth are set forth, I think on this slide are really good choices and good options and there are lots and lots of synonyms for them. But it's really just about observing what's in front of you listening to what the victim and the witnesses. And the suspects are saying and capturing that on the page. And also, thank you, for mentioning around photographs. Because, of course, that's true. Unfortunately, things happen. You know, photographs, digital photographs, even disappear, were old enough to remember when we didn't have digital and everything, was it was printed out. And it was even little more difficult sometimes to reconcile what was on the photograph with what was described or not described. So, from a prosecutor, my requests are, my law enforcement friends, is to make sure that that happens, is that, your description reconciles.

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Matches up with what the photographs are.

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And, if it doesn't, tell me why. Tell me why the photograph looks different. And that's a part of being accurate and thorough is to let me understand. And let me know why the photograph was taken. And, why it does or doesn't match up with the description that you have so brilliantly put into your report.

42:42

The fourth bullet point on report writing basics is about avoiding words that minimize or trivialized incidents. And we've mentioned this now a couple of different time. So we have some examples of this.

43:00

You know, we're so used to, in some ways, language or words, and that we use so often that we stop even thinking really about what they mean or that they may be problematic.

43:15

And there are a lot of these words and phrases in violence against women investigation and prosecution. And in some ways, we have gotten better.

43:26

But there's a lot of room for improvement, so some examples of the problematic language that we have seen in the past.

43:35

So private family matter is what, back not that long ago, folks used to refer to as what we now refer to as domestic violence or domestic disturbance.

43:51

Which, in and of itself, is not great. It doesn't fully capture what you, all as law enforcement officers, go out and are called to, and the chaos and the violence and the brutality that's happening. But it's certainly better than private family matter.

44:08

Another, and Steve was getting close to this and when he was referring to the Washington cuddler is peeping Tom, right. I mean, when we think about, now what the behavior is around a person, who is doing the stalking. And the trespassing and the sexual misconduct, right? They are a predator. They're a stalker and a sexual predator.

44:36

Another problematic term that is becoming less and less frequent is date rape, right?

44:45

What we now understand, the better terminology to be, is non stranger sexual assault.

44:55

We understand that the vast majority of sexual assault that are committed are perpetrated against people who the predator or the perpetrator known.

45:06

And oftentimes, and we're going to discuss this a little more in length and just a few minutes, oftentimes, when you put words, adjectives, descriptors before, say the word rape, what you're doing, unintentionally, or not, is minimizing the violence that has occurred.

45:25

Another example of problematic language, and Steve and I have referenced a couple of different times, is Victimless prosecution.

45:34

Of course, when you're talking about specifically violence against women, crime, there is no such thing as a victimless case. All of those cases, of course, have a victim, again, to violence has been perpetrated. What you really mean when a person says that is that we are prosecuting. We're investigating on evidence.

45:59

We're collecting evidence, We're going to go forward with the evidence we collect and we're going to prosecute on the evidence without putting the onus and the burden on the victim.

46:09

It's me as a prosecutor saying, I prepare every case, anticipating that the victim because of the pressures. And the dynamics that are happening is not going to be able to participate in this prosecution. And I rely so much on the investigation and how that investigation is put forth in your really good report.

46:33

words and phrases, they all carry meaning.

46:36

And just as I was talking to you about how, for instance, putting adjective there descriptors like date in front of rape tends to minimize the violence

46:49

That's done. It's true and a number of other phrases that we so often use without any malice on our part. It's just that they have been around for so long. And we're so used to saying that we've not really stopped for awhile to think about the implications that they have.

47:07

So one of those examples is violent rape, right? So when we stop and we think about what that means, if you put in violent, in turn of rape, what you're implying is that there is a rape, much not violent or that

doesn't cause harm or damage. And I'm not talking about physical harm or damaged. Because of course, we know that a great percentage of rape don't actually result in physical injury. I'm talking about other types of harm.

47:40

and damage. we talked about, um, date rape but another example of putting a qualifier or adjective in front of rape is a good rape, right? We all know in the criminal justice system, when we say that, that's the code that's coded language for, Oh, this is a, quote unquote good case. And if we had another hour and a half, we could talk about, and then we could unpack all that that met.

48:09

But it means, right?

48:12

Really, when we say that, that that if there is a rape case, that's not, does not qualify for our attention. And of course, that's not true, right? All rape cases are deserving of all of our attention. All of our resources, all our bar investigatory power.

48:35

Innocent victim is another phrase that we so often use.

48:41

And again, when you put that word innocent in front of victim, what that does is it implies that some victims are innocent, and then others are not the innocent, but others are complicit the others.

48:53

Maybe deserves what they got, right.

48:57

We understand as prosecutors, when we walk into a courtroom, that oftentimes that's the challenge. And the hurdle that we have to overcome in the subconscious of those making the ultimate decision.

49:10

And that's difficult at enough.

49:13

But those of us in the criminal justice system need to help ourselves by not using language that adds to those challenges and those hurdles, right? Not an innocent victim, that person is a victim

49:27

And, finally, another phrase that often gets bandied about is alleged victim, right? If you were to read a newspaper, look on social media, listening to the news.

49:41

Anytime you hear about a violent crime happening, you're probably going to hear the word alleged in front of a victim for for them. It's for liability purposes, right? Hopefully.

49:55

But when you, as an officer, write a report, and you have made the determination that has resulted in an arrest and a referral to the district attorney's office, and that person is on the alleged victim, That person is a victim, The criminal justice system has determined at that point that that person is a victim, and this is same for me.

50:14

So, when we get to that point, no person in the criminal justice system, especially in our report should be putting the word alleged in front of a victim.

50:25

Steve, is there anything you want to add around that?

50:28

The same goes for suspect this if you, if you develop probable cause they're not an alleged suspect anymore there they are suspect and so just

50:42

Stop using those qualifiers, just, you are dealing with people.

50:49

You're a trained professional and you've done your investigation, you develop your probable cause and so that's what you, That's what you need. You need to call it what it is.

51:02

Yeah.

51:03

There are a few more examples of language that we often use that have a difficult or challenging connotation and that there are better choices that we have developed. So, the first victim's story, right? The implication there is that it's made up because, you know, who tell stories can tell stories that. We tell stories to our kids, right, and that are fiction. So, a better way to talk about that is that it's the victim's account, right? The victim told me, the victim said, victim stated, victim disclosed. There are lots, and lots of ways to say what the victim told you, as opposed to the story, the next consented, the victim consented. And, again, this implies that the victim was willing, that the person was volunteered to participate in an action, as opposed to something that was done to them.

51:59

A better choice would be submitted, right? Or depending upon the context. Because we talked about how important context that it could be that the person was forced. The person was coerced.

52:13

The person was made to. another difficult phrase is, and we've talked about this: even I have is uncooperative victim. So, uncooperative victim doesn't take into account or, or it discount the difficult situation. The victims often find themselves in, when we're talking about domestic and sexual violence, because of the dynamics that we know are present.

52:40

So a better way to describe their situation.

52:44

Is it they are reluctant or a non participatory victim?

52:49

I, personally, I, when I talk about victims who aren't able to participate, I say, non participating. But you can also, I've also heard it phrased as reluctant. And then, finally, the last example we had, and Steve talked about this, is the victim had sex with, and again, this is implied victim blaming. It implies that the victim voluntarily participated in something.

53:16

So, better way to phrase that. Is that the suspect And then you list the actions and behaviors. Remember, it's what Steve said, You just say, What happened? You just say what it is.

53:29

So the suspect, put his penis in the victim's vagina.

53:33

The suspect forced the victim on, the bed, X, Y, and Z. I think it seems difficult at first because we're so used to using these phrases to describe as coded language, what quote unquote, happened. But when you really parse out what it was that the suspect did, it becomes so much clearer.

53:59

I think, so, a couple of those are really key. And, I read police reports.

54:07

No, the victim said, no, the suspect threatened her. So, she finally consented.

54:14

If there's threat, if there's fear, consent can't exist when their fear. And so, if the victim tells you, I was afraid of the suspect, and there, There is no consent. And so, you can't finally consent.

54:30

You can't reluctantly consent or so, making sure that we use a A more accurate word and then the uncooperative victim. You know, I was guilty of it. I told, victims, You, need to get out of this relationship. you need to leave this person.

54:54

Until one day, I was thinking, oh.

54:58

What would it take me to leave the relationship I'm in, now, I'm, where I've been married for over 34 years now, so, I'm not leaving anytime soon.

55:10

But, if it's not just a simple matter of going home and packing up a suitcase and I leave, I mean, for most of these victims, they have kids and they have kids in school and you've got to find somebody to get your stuff and you're worried, that this person is this bad person. If I leave my valuable stuff there, unattended, it's not going to be there. And so.

55:38

Then, when the victim doesn't follow our great advice and immediately leaves this relationship than we think they're uncooperative.

55:46

And that's, it's not that it's it's an we're doing it, or making a bigger asked and they, than we thought about.

55:56

We're thinking, just purely from a safety point of view, you need to get to a safe place.

56:02

And in some cases, they're in a really dangerous situation, and we need to get them in shelter for the night, or something like that. But, we need to be careful about how we are viewing victims and their ability to participate in prosecution.

56:22

It's really It really is for me.

56:27

Shopping and I don't use that sort of in a hyperbolic way when I started looking at my own language that I use.

56:37

That I hadn't previously thought of, and how much of the language around violence against women, domestic, and sexual violence, that I, with both reading, but also using, was language of consent. And by that, I mean that, it.

56:53

It's the language that implied blame on the victim implied that the victim in some way participated willingly or voluntarily, or that sanitize the violence that was happening. That was that the victim was being, and so I'll just call myself out. again, when I say the violence that was happening. Violence doesn't just happen.

57:18

There is a person or persons who make the choice to perpetrate violence, right? So the violence, the victim was being subjected to.

57:28

And so it takes concerted effort and vigilance constantly when we're speaking to each other, when we're doing webinars, when we're writing reports, or for supervisors that are reviewing reports. Because we're so used to, as we've talked about, the language that's been embedded into our vocabulary, that we don't think about anymore, that minimizes and hides the intrinsic violence, that. unfortunately, we've become desensitized to, if we're dealing with it, as part of the criminal justice system, day in and day out.

58:13

So no, this slide, and then the next one, sort of summarizes the conversation you and I have been having to be around the important of sort of adhering to that vigilance when we're writing reports, and when reviewing reports. And when as prosecutors were taking that language, and those words, and putting it forward into our case.

58:36

You know, we were talking just a minute ago about the better choice of phrases, and vocabulary, and language, and how, like you said, did you say what it is? So it's not sexual intercourse, or had oral sex, because those acts are by implication, acts of consent.

58:57

So it's on a very basic, or for a very basic example, it's the suspect forced his penis into the victim vagina. The suspect forced the victim's head down to his genitalia.

59:14

Know, you can follow along with each of those examples that we typically use, Perform fellatio receive kindness, had sex, and just step back for a second. And depending upon the facts and circumstances of the case that you're investigating. Just simply describe what it was, that the suspected did to the victim adding context, right? So, for instance, if the victim, quote, unquote didn't fight back. I think we have some information slides about this in just a little bit, but what does the context around that person, not being able to, quote, unquote fight back, that's why context, is so important. And I wanted to just

highlight, again, one of the examples on this slide, which is a violent relationship and remembering the relationships aren't violent, People are violent, right?

1:00:09

So when as a prosecutor, I read oh, Jane Doe and John Doe have been in an abusive relationship for some time.

1:00:17

That's not accurate.

1:00:20

There may be abuse between the individual that time as John Doe is perpetrated violence on Jane Doe. And then, if there's a if violence by Jane Doe, I would like to know the context of violence.

1:00:31

Right, that's my contact is so important, and that's why we have to be very careful about this language of consent: language that conceals the violence language that implies blame the victim language that conceals the violence system being perpetrated, by the suspect onto the victim. And we see these turn all the time in police reports, and used by prosecutors, because we don't think about it. You know, Steve will use the word Cuddled, we often see fondled, suspects fondled, or caressed or hugged.

1:01:09

If a suspect has been arrested for a sexual or domestic violence crime, it is highly likely that what that person was doing was not fondling, caressing, hugging, kissing, or making love. It's probably that the person was touching, poking, groping, or even with kissing, kissing implies usual participation.

1:01:36

As a prosecutor I would love if, in fact, the description was defendant forced his lips on to the victim's lips because in fact, that's what was happening.

1:01:46

There was no reciprocity of affection between the two of them, just as basic as it is. Describe what was happening, describe what the suspect was doing.

1:02:00

And then avoiding victim blaming language.

1:02:07

Um, do not suggest the victim is responsible for acts committed against them. We've now given you some examples of how to avoid doing that.

1:02:20

There are certain language that blames victims by portraying them as the person who caused the behavior, right?

1:02:28

And we're going to give you an example of that in the next slide that they in fact somehow provoked the behavior. Well, what did you do? Right, it's not a why question, but it is a why question, because the question really is, well, why did he do that?

1:02:44

Right?

1:02:45

Unless you did something, he wouldn't have done that. That's the implication, in that, in that question.

1:02:54

Um, there is a great video by Jackson Cat talking about how our language structure, our sentence structure.

1:03:07

How it went from John beat Mary, to now what we say is a Mary was a battered woman and then John is completely taken out of our sentence structure, and the first time I heard that I saw that I was like, oh my gosh.

1:03:22

Like how did that happen?

1:03:24

But it has happened. It's very typical that we refer to victims as a battered person or a battered woman without even mentioning there was a person there who battered her right. And so what we need to remember to do in our report, is not to conceal the violence by rendering the perpetrator invisible.

1:03:45

So an example of how victim blaming language, really what appears to be sort of benign or subtle victim blaming the victim blaming language shows up is, on this next slide that you're going to see.

1:04:05

The 14 year old victim appeared older than her chronological age.

1:04:13

And Steve, can you identify what part of that might be as a prosecutor problematic for me, when I read that sentence.

1:04:24

When the statute is how old the victim is, not their appearance, not there.

1:04:31

It doesn't matter how the victim of looks, it is the fact that they meet the statutory requirements, and there, there's no excuse for that.

1:04:47

Can you?

1:04:48

As a prosecutor, what I read in that, is that you're providing the rider of the report, it's providing an invitation to the defendant and the defense around a defense, Right? You're almost agreeing with them.

1:05:04

Yeah, you're almost agreeing with them. Another example is this.

1:05:09

She said, The unknown male followed her to the parking lot and grabbed her breast as she was trying to unlock her car.

1:05:17

So that's where I wished this would have stopped at that paragraph that things would have stopped.

1:05:23

The next sentence, it is noted, she was wearing a low cut blouse that exposed her cleavage, um, that is an implication, that because of what she was wearing, she invited the actions of the perpetrator.

1:05:43

It doesn't for the prosecutor for me

1:05:46

Add anything, to my understanding of the situation, or to the crime.

1:05:56

It, again, only feeds into existing stereotypes around victim and who is deserving of our attention and our resources.

1:06:12

And the final example that we have is, she stated that despite knowing how upset her husband was, she called him a name.

1:06:22

Her husband then punched her in the left side of her face with his right hand. so this was going back to what we were referring to, which is, well, what did you do?

1:06:34

How did you provoke him, right?

1:06:38

This statement around, she stated that despite knowing how upset her husband was, she called in the name, was, Well, if you hadn't called him a name, then he wouldn't have punched you.

1:06:51

All of those sentences, if you stopped at a certain point, would have been, OK.

1:06:58

The 14 year old victim, That's how old she was. Period. Victim was 14 years old, right? The unknown male followed her to the parking lot. Grabbed her breast, fine, done, her husband, then puncturing the left side of her face with his right hand.

1:07:14

Done, So just really reviewing what you've written and asking yourself.

1:07:19

And I ask myself to this, when I read things, or when I say things, and why is it, did I say that, why did I feel it necessary to add these, because that will help you in the future, to sort of self edit.

1:07:33

Then, considering how certain statements blame the victim for what occurred, right.

1:07:42

And so shifting the blame not to the perpetrator, who who would remember is the person who chose to perpetrate. chose location. Chose the person against whom they were going to perpetrate shows how they were going to perpetrate, right? That's the person that's in charge.

1:08:00

But somehow many times that blame gets shifted to the victim.

1:08:06

So, for instance, we see this, the victims stated she didn't do anything to stop him.

1:08:13

And actually, I'm going to ask that we put all the examples up because in a lot of ways, we can avoid victim blaming if we just ask about the context and the circumstances around doing that, victim never made any attempt to scream or get away, right?

1:08:32

So as a prosecutor, I would be thinking, well, why was she frozen in terror?

1:08:40

Did the vector defendants, or suspects, say something? She feel because of something, some way that he acted that.

1:08:49

She was in fear, or she was in danger, right?

1:08:53

Like, the statements that are made around the victim, not doing anything, are as if this violence happened in a vacuum, and that the victim didn't have any thoughts or feelings around what was what was happening around her. So I would ask you to go back and take a look at one of those first few slides that we presented.

1:09:16

Saying that this is a really accurate and thorough report

1:09:20

Means having to elicit from the victim What's their full experience?

1:09:28

Right? What were they thinking? What were they feeling, what did they see, feel, smell, touch, all of that, in the moment, around the incident.

1:09:39

So this would be a good time to talk about what no looks like.

1:09:42

So as police officers, when I asked you that question, and so what does no look like, you know, what No, it looks like, because I've seen it in your reports. You tell the suspect you're under arrest, put your hands behind your back.

1:09:59

And then, this evolves into a use of force incident, any, right, those reports, the suspect tightened up, his jaw clenched keys. He crouched in a, you know, and, you know, fighting stance he, you make these physical descriptions of what no looks like to justify what you're going to do next.

1:10:21

So, you clearly understand what it looks like, how to describe it, and yet, a lot of times, when we ask a victim about that, the victim says, I told him, no and that's, we documented, tell me more about what

that will look like. Well, I was crying uncontrollably. I said, no, seven times I curled up in the fetal position, I turn my back on and all of those different kinds of things.

1:10:53

We can do a better job describing what happened if we ask the right questions, but we we don't ask the right questions.

1:11:03

What did you say?

1:11:04

And the victim says, I told them no, and we go on to the next, the next part of the incident.

1:11:10

We don't do our victims justice by not letting them explain to them, how helped me understand how he would have known that you didn't want to have sex with him. While I did these things.

1:11:27

And so then we're going to be able to have a much more accurate picture of what's going on in that room or in that incident.

1:11:41

And the same can be said for the next two bullet points. And I'll go through these quickly to get to the next slide you're going to cover. But in terms of the victim willingly drank alcohol with him, again, you know we talked about wanting to in our thorough and accurate report, Look at the Perpetrators. Behavior?

1:12:00

The grooming, the organization and the Premeditation.

1:12:03

So as a prosecutor, I want to know, well, what sort of planning, if any, did the suspect have in terms of providing alcohol to the victim, right? How much alcohol was given, who had control of the alcohol, who control, where the victim of alcohol, who's around, and what controls of the perpetrator have when the victim was drinking alcohol, right? What access to the perpetrator allow to the victim?

1:12:29

I mean, I can and Steve knows I could sit here for five minutes and probably rattle off questions to you just around this one particular statement again, it's about context, and the same goes for the last bullet point, the victim never call the police after the alleged attack.

1:12:45

So, just unpacking that sentence, if, as a, as an officer, you have completed your report and you're writing a report.

1:12:53

The word alleged should not be in your police report, because you have determined that, in fact, the, the perpetrator has, in fact, attacked, abuse the victim, right?

1:13:07

So, help me understand, Jane, calling when you did coin, at least when you did. Help me understand. Right, and she, at that point, we'll be able to probably tell you why there was, if there was a delay in reporting. And I guess I want to say one last thing before we move on, around the phrase delayed reporting. Because that, again, implies that something's wrong with the fact that a person didn't report until after, much after the incident. When we know that, in fact, that's very, very common for lots of reasons. So, again, going back to what Steve said, which is just saying what it is, or say, what happened, I would submit that, it's just as easy to say, victim reported to police 10 days after incident as a report, as opposed to saying there was a delay report, Reported two years after incident, right.

1:14:02

And as a prosecutor, what I want to know, is, from you, you've done a really through an accurate investigation, in your report, and you say, You asked the victim after victim help me understand reporting now, and she was able to tell you all the reasons and the circumstances surrounding what led up to her reporting two years after the abuse.

1:14:28

OK.

1:14:31

So, our job, as police officers, is to help with our victims, understand what is going on, and so, understanding the human body.

1:14:47

The brain is going to work, and your body is going to react whether you

1:14:52

want it to or not. If you remember, when you're a kid, you play the game of Flinch, when people would swing it, you act like they're going to hit. You can see if you're gonna flinch or not, and you, you can't help that, your, your self preservation instinct kick in, and, and you, you have to react the way, that your body knows. So, there's some people that are going to react that way around snakes, because they have past experience snakes, and they can't help how they're going to react because their brain has said snakes or dangerous or whatever it is. And it's the same with sexual assault.

1:15:38

The male and female human bodies can become physically aroused without consent or without being physically attractive to the other person, and so, this happens with both male victims and female victims, and so, it doesn't mean it's not suspects will use this as proof that the victim consented, or the victim enjoyed it. And, that's not the case, and it can be the cause for victims to delay recording, because they don't understand what happened to them. Or, I must have enjoyed it, because this happened.

1:16:16

So, understanding, if you're not sure how to talk to victim about that, go in and talk to one of your nurses at the ER, and help say, Look, on occasion. I'm going to have to talk to victims about this, and how do I best explain that, And, they will help you explain that in a manner that you feel comfortable with, and that makes sense to victims.

1:16:39

So make sure that you, there are a lot of times when I've talked to victims, and I'm, They're being very forthcoming with me.

1:16:51

For the most part, but I feel there's something else, and so as as you talk to them, and say, look, I'm here to help me understand, this is a safe place we can talk, then they, they talk about that, this is very confusing for them. And so, then I'm able to talk to them and say, look, I've investigated a lot of these cases. You're not the only person that's ever had this happen. This is not unusual. And so, because a lot of time, so it's our victims, and why they delay as they feel isolated, they feel like nobody's going to understand what they went through that.

1:17:29

They're the only one going through this, because we don't talk about sexual assault and domestic violence as openly as we could.

1:17:39

So just helping victims not feel alone, but feel supported is very important in situations like this.

1:17:50

Also, as we've talked about, in using the active voice, make sure that you are attributing the actions, the crime, to the suspect.

1:18:03

Not, he kissed her, and he had sex with her. The suspect, clamped his mouth, onto the victims, and forced his tongue into her mouth. Make sure that we're using the words that describe the crime. That happen. That's our job is to investigate criminal behavior. We don't investigate kissing, we investigate sexual assault.

1:18:24

And so make sure that we you can and, again, if you're going to investigate these cases, you have to be able to say things like penis and vagina and those types of things. Because if you're uncomfortable saying those things, you're going to make the victim uncomfortable that you can't say those words to them.

1:18:46

And so, make sure that you can talk about these events and that you can make sure that you make the victim feel comfortable about talking about these events with you.

1:19:03

And so, as Erin kind of talked about a little bit, what's the Jackson Katz video? Relationships aren't abusive, offenders are abusive. So don't describe things as abusive relationships.

1:19:19

It's a person that is abusive when the domestic dispute occurred, It's not a domestic dispute, It's an assault.

1:19:31

And if you look at the description below and offender assaults a cab driver for fair, it's not a fair dispute.

1:19:38

It's a robbery.

1:19:39

And so Mary was raped.

1:19:43

Mary was raped by who was the offender in this.

1:19:50

And then the last one, we talk about statistics. Every 46 seconds a woman is raped.

1:19:58

The woman is not just raped out of nowhere. Again, it takes a suspect.

1:20:04

It takes a perpetrator in that equation for that, that incident happens.

1:20:15

We talked about what no looks like, and making sure that you're describing what those victim behaviors are. I'm looking away from the perpetrator, I'm squeezing my legs together. We hear victim say, I, I felt like I wasn't in my body. I just lay there and let it happen and pretended like I wasn't there.

1:20:39

And so other additional circumstances that can happen or it's alcohol or drugs are used. You know, we talk about date rape drugs, the number one date, rape, drugs, or alcohol course because it increases the vulnerability.

1:20:55

And again, so this is my little soapbox. When we talk about the use of alcohol.

1:21:03

When we in law enforcement, one of the the most worrisome things for a law enforcement management person is the annual Christmas party.

1:21:20

Because cops drink, and then cops become, oh, really honest.

1:21:27

And they say what they really feel, and they say what they think about each other.

1:21:32

That's what alcohol does to people, and yet, and we talk about that, We have friends, It's like, Oh, at all, at that guys drink, Because you can't tell you what he thinks. And all that. Yeah.

1:21:42

When we have victims that have been drinking, all of a sudden, we think that, that makes them less truthful, because they've been drinking.

1:21:54

And it doesn't, It doesn't work that way. Alcohol works the same way for everybody, no matter what circumstances. So just because a victim has been drinking, doesn't mean that they're lying about. So that's my little bandwagon, soapbox. So there, for just a second. silence does not equal consent just because the victim stop resisting doesn't mean they're consenting.

1:22:19

It means that they have just given up, just submitting. It's not consent because the victim was asleep or unconscious.

1:22:33

That means you're not giving consent.

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I mean, it's not that hard to understand, and then talking about what how the victim's behaviors changed after this event, they're afraid to be alone in the room with this person. All of these different things. How is your life changed since this event is going to help you more clearly understand what was going on?

1:23:01

Document what the victim says.

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Instead of saying, the victim never made any attempt to scream or get away, asking the victim, 'What did you feel when this happened?' And you hear things like, 'I couldn't move. I thought it was happening to someone else', the victim says, I didn't state I, because they did anything to stop them. When he climbed on top of me, I was afraid he was going to kill me.

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Over 50% of victims that are sexually assaulted fear that they are going to be killed or seriously injured.

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And so, a lot of times, I've told a story, and a lot of my trainings I interviewed a victim, and I said, help me understand.

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What you thought. What you thought might happen if you try to run away or get away.

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And she said, I felt like I could either be raped, or I could try and get away and have the shit beat out of me, and then rape. So I settled for being raped.

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That makes perfect sense.

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When you look at the options and What your alternatives are, you take, What is safest for you, and so that's when you tell a victim. I'm glad that you're here to be able to talk to me today. I'm glad you were killed. We will get through this together, and I will do everything I can to help you.

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So, as we've covered the basics of report writing, again, know who your audience is.

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We showed you that, that chart of all the people that you're going to see, your police report, know what your purpose is, using clear unbiased descriptive words that accurately describe the events that happened, and clearly represent what the victim is telling you, accurately represent what they were feeling. And avoid words that trivialized what happened to them on this, probably the absolute worst day of their life.

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So ways that you can increase effectiveness of the report writing your team members.

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These are all things that we ought to be doing on a regular basis, after action, case reviews. How did it go, even if you do really well?

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You can always do better, so what, what can we do to, to provide even better service? case audits. If you worked sexual assault cases or domestic violence cases, the caseload is great. They keep coming in. So, having someone else, even if you get a detective or sergeant from another agency to come in and randomly pull 5 or 10 random sexual assault cases and domestic violence cases, just to audit, how did you do? Well? Did you handle it as well as you, as you could?

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Because, as I tell officers, when they get their evaluation, if you want me to tell you, again, for the 10th or 12th time that you show up to work properly, and your uniform is neatly pressed, and you have a good grasp of the statutes, and you get along, Well, as people, you already know that stuff. The things that are gonna make you better are the things that you don't know, or the things that you can work on.

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So, if we are striving to do better, we should be looking at case audits, we should be welcoming, evaluation of what we're doing, what could I do better?

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Then, these cases are big deal. These are cases that we're sending people to prison on. These are things these are cases where we can actually hold people accountable, and those should be recognized when officers do well. Really, these cases are homicide prevention cases, is what I look at. When we do any good investigation and we hold this offender accountable, we're telling them this behavior is not acceptable in our town and our county and our community. And we're not going to put up with it.

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And so, we're working on saving someone's life, I'm holding this offender accountable.

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Erin, anything you want to add to that?

1:27:51

Just briefly, I agree with everything that you said, and and would put in a plug for your constant communication as a law enforcement officer, and as an agency with the District Attorney's Office.

1:28:03

I, if I'm working law enforcement agency, I would want to know how many of my cases that I've referred are actually being taken out by the DA's office or being prosecuted. And not that conviction is dispositive of success in a case, because certainly it's around engagement with the victims, that really, really matters and whether they felt relieved and supported. But what is the percentage of your cases that are

being taken up and are resulting in a conviction? And how is your communication with your district attorney's office? Do you really, truly have a mutual reciprocal open door policy? So, I wouldn't work towards. I would work towards that. I know, for instance, which these agency in the district attorney's office, I used to work with, urban development of a pretty frequent meeting, multi-disciplinary meeting that happened that really improved relationship building and the success, the, the quality and success of cases and engagement around victims. So, thinking about what you can do with your partners.

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Your stakeholders in your community will also result in the success that you're looking for.

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Perfect.

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There are also other things Erin and I are big proponents of checklists.

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We had discussion, years ago, almost every state has a a DUI checklist.

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If you pull over a DUI driver, suspected DUI driver, these are the tests you give. These are the questions you ask, these are the procedures you do. If you do these procedures, you have this certain percentage chance of your case, will be prosecuted, and you have this percentage chance of it, will, that you will be successful in that prosecution. And so, we talked about that at length about, why could we not do that? And elastic violence cases that, if you have a checklist to make sure that you are covering all the bases you're asking, all the questions are collecting all the correct evidence, that will lead to more successful prosecutions. And so, the IACP has a few report review checklists. And I'm going to turn it over to Julia from IACP and let her fill you in on how you can find these.

1:30:35

Thank Steve and Erin. Yes so we have these five checklists for domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, strangulation, and protection order violations. And those can all be found in the ... Online Resource Library titled Police Response to Violence Against Women. So the URL is listed right here and also works well to Google it or just go to the IACP.org.

1:31:04

And in addition to those checklists, we also have a whole lot of free roll call training videos as well as a whole lot of recorded webinars, so depending on when you are watching and listening to this, we will have even more than the ones listed. We also have webinars on Witness Intimidation, Firearms, the trauma informed Interviewing techniques.

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There's a whole lot of information videos, as well as policy guidelines, training guidelines, model policies, et cetera.

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Erin and Steve talked a lot about the documenting, the context of the situation, incident relationship in reports, and the impact of trauma.

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And so I want to highlight here that we have a project on trauma informed sexual assault investigation, And it has produced a number of deliverables, including the webinar that I mentioned about trauma informed interviewing.

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We have a document on successful interviewing, and it talks about how to reframe questions and not use the why and gives you a lot of other examples as well as explanations for, for why it is best to avoid why. Also, the IACP is always available for training and technical assistance. We are happy to direct you to a resource if you find our online resource library a little bit too large, to

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Find what you're looking for, or if you're interested in a virtual training, in person training, you have a specific question, we're happy to provide technical assistance. And the best way to contact us is to e-mail stopviolence@theiacp.org, and someone will respond and reach out to you.

1:33:00

There are also a lot of national resources available from folks who are not the IACP. And Erin and Steve, did one of you want to explain me?

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Go Ahead Erin

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Thanks, Steve. And I think all of us who've been involved in gender based violence, prosecution, and investigation for any length of time, have become aware, hopefully, of the amazing national resources available.

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In addition to IACP and so you'll see on this slide and the next slide, Some of those that have been listed. End Violence Against Women. International Resource Library, a library, AEquitas for prosecutors, so even if there aren't prosecutors on the line, law enforcement refer your prosecutors to this particular resource, because as a prosecutor time and time again, especially when I'm tasked with coming up with trainings, I will first go to ... to see if they have a training.

1:34:06

So there's no need to re-invent the wheel and really that can be said for all of these, The National Network to End Domestic Violence. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Family Justice Center Alliance all have amazing resources and information and it's not a topic that we've talked about today But I'm sure some of you are also involved in grant writing. And so they have information that would be really helpful for you. So you don't have to go digging through a ton of websites and it's already available to you strangulation Training Institute if you're involved at all in Domestic Violence Investigations. That means you do strangulation cases all the time and they have one of the best triangulation courses and training materials available So make yourself aware of that. of course the Stalking Prevention Awareness and Resource Center.

1:35:01

The toolkit for law enforcement and legal professionals on understanding and investigating technology misuse. Of course, in the last decade, especially, that has become a topic that we have had to become well versed in because of course perpetrators are now using technology all the time, especially to stalk their victims. So they provide a ton of helpful information. The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative toolkit around the neurobiology of trauma. So this is something especially around sexual assault kits and the backlog movement that happened over the last couple of years. There's been a lot of resources that have been developed. So, take a look at that, and then, of course, this work that we all do is so difficult. And we all know that.

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And so, now, luckily, there are more and more resources being developed around that, and one of those resources is the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit that you should take a look at.

Yeah, it's important that we take care of ourselves and take care of each other. These are really emotionally draining cases. They're rewarding. You feel like you've accomplished something, but a really can take a toll on you.

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And then, of course, reach out to your local partners. So we, we always do a better job when

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we do it together

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People have different roles. We can share the workload. We can share the resources. And so reach out and find out what's available to you locally because it's a big deal. We should always be building partnerships because it makes our community better, and it makes our community stronger.

1:36:57

Absolutely. And Erin, Steve, thank you so much for joining me and the IACP today and sharing your expertise and knowledge. I am really excited that we have this resource and can share it with the field. So if you're watching, please share this with someone. Make sure that you help us spread the word.

And, of course, check out the website, as I mentioned earlier, for other resources, guidelines, brochures, and training videos.

1:37:24

So thank you so much, and stay safe