

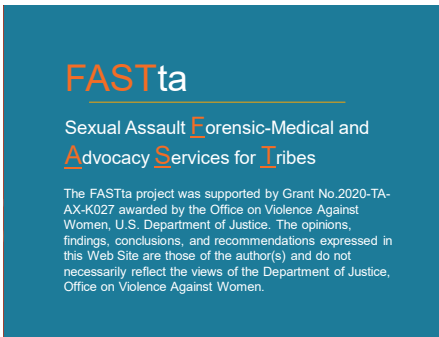




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Protecting Victim Service Providers Against Workplace Violence



STEPS WE CAN TAKE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

Speaker Info

Tanya Grassel-Krietlow

Gayle Thom





Tragic incidences of violence against victim service providers in the workplace are increasing. Between 2011-2013, there were 23,000 workplace assaults, and nearly 75% of these were in healthcare and social service settings.

In 2018, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that victim service providers were nearly five times as likely to suffer a serious workplace violence injury than workers in other sectors.



Workplace Safety
Victim service providers
face unique
vulnerabilities at work



This issue is especially acute in the many geographic areas where there is

- a vast coverage area,
- severe shortage of advocates, qualified mental health providers, law enforcement and health providers,
- technology barriers, and
- limited referral resources.



Far too many social workers, advocates and health professionals have lost their lives to workplace violence. The alarming statistics do not capture the substantial number of unreported assaults, which, according to one survey, are as high as 85% of all assaults.



Workplace Safety

- Addressing this growing epidemic of workplace violence is a key success factor in reducing provider burnout and increasing retention.
- Promoting workplace safety is also critical to ensuring a sufficient mentally and physically healthy workforce.



Workplace Safety: A Healing Environment

- Preventing workplace violence is also essential in providing a healing environment for clients.
- Clients witnessing violence in workplace settings, can set back treatment for months, if not years.



Part Of Overall Safety Planning

Planning for victims' and survivors' freedom from violence is a critical component of victim services. Advocates' safety is also a vital part of overall safety planning. Yet advocate safety can be a complex matter.



**Safety For All Involved In The
Victim Assistance Realm**

Training, research, and evaluation often focuses on the safety of the victims and survivors we are privileged to serve.

Without addressing advocate safety, are we missing the true impact of striving to build a deeper and more comprehensively resilient perspective of safety for all involved in the victim assistance realm?



Simple Steps Victim Service Providers Can Use

We have identified some simple steps victim service providers can use in our everyday lives.

These steps are not meant to be all-encompassing.



Be Aware, Be Prepared, Rehearse And Plan

- When discussing workplace safety, we should consider readiness and response. More specifically, be aware, be prepared, rehearse and plan.
- Awareness
- Preparedness
- Rehearse and Plan



Critical Incidents

- Contain.
- Control.
- Communicate.
- Call For Assistance.



Natural Disasters

- Blizzards, dangerous wind chills, tornadoes and even prairie fires are events we are confronted with in our area.
- Offenders and known abusers among those needing evacuation and assistance
- Where will they be directed to seek assistance or shelter during that time?



Basic 40 Hour Crisis Response Training

Training Exercises

- Skills and networking
- Enhance multidisciplinary team



De-escalation Skills

- Online or in person training
 - Follow-up trainings to ensure skills are current
- Often the people we work with are in some type of crisis and de-escalation is necessary to
- understand their needs
 - let them know we hear and support them
 - and that they are in a place to understand us and begin to build trust
- Explore de-escalation cross-training




Situational Awareness: Organizations

- Knowing where you are
- What is going on around you
- For organizations, this includes
 - awareness about personnel location and assigned duties.
 - the environment, and
 - any potential risks.



**Situational Awareness:
Victim Service Providers**

- Knowing where you are
- What is going on around you
- For victim service providers this includes
 - awareness about the victim and the offender, both.
- Does the area pose a threat?
- Is there a potential for bad weather?
- Is there adequate cell phone coverage?
- Is there a known potential for intimidation of the advocate or the victim?



Workplace Wellness

- a broad term used to describe activities, programs, and policies designed to support healthy behavior.
- stress reduction
- exercise programs
- nutrition education
- trauma informed, victim centered trainings
- other professional development
- team building
- health screens



Personal Wellness:
Victim Assistance Providers

Components of personal health and wellness

- 1) Physical
- 2) Emotional
- 3) Social
- 4) Spiritual
- 5) Intellectual





Workplace Wellness

- Physical safety
- Mental health



Self Defense

It is unfortunate that we must deal with the possibility of workplace violence.

Data indicates:

- Law enforcement may not arrive in time to help you
- You may have to defend yourself and others to survive an incident.
- It helps if you are **aware, prepared, and have rehearsed.**



Self Defense: Preventing An Incident

- Self defense is a lifelong skill, like learning about first aid. The skills learned are helpful in preventing an incident by using creative thinking and problem solving.
- Self defense classes can build confidence, increase feelings of safety and decrease feelings of stress.



Debriefs

- Debriefing for victim service providers addresses secondary traumatic stress in those who work to assist victims.
- Debriefing provides practical strategies for ourselves.
- Debriefing is also useful to assess and assist our co-workers that we are privileged to work with in our communities.



Debriefs

- There are various types of debriefing.
- Group debriefing.
 - Individual.
 - Tribal talking circles.
 - Cultural activity specific to the tribe.
- Debriefing should be done after a major event, however, routine debriefs built into team meetings or schedules are recommended and most beneficial.



In Conclusion

- Our goal has been to provide some education and inspiration by offering some ideas and practices that victim service providers can use in everyday life. This information is not meant to be all-encompassing; but it should be thought provoking and help promote conversation surrounding safety in the workplace.



• Gayle Thom thomhome@hills.net

• Tanya Kriefflow tanya@sdnafvsa.com

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