



# SVU Multidisciplinary Team Approach

UNDERSTANDING VICTIM BEHAVIOR,  
PRESENTATION AND RECANTATION

RACHEL D. FISCHER BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P

# Objectives

- ▶ Understand how to work collaboratively with multidisciplinary teams
- ▶ Implement trauma informed and SURVIVOR informed practices in the MDT
- ▶ Understand the mindset of victims
- ▶ Promote rapport building techniques
- ▶ Understand Recantation and stigma surrounding the process
- ▶ Learn de-Escalation techniques



# Address Bias

---

RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS BIAS, ASSUMPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES  
ABOUT VICTIMS

# Bias- Acknowledge and Remove

Sometimes even though we think what they are doing is bad... They may have come from worse.

*“Somebody once asked me why I always insist on taking the hard road..... What makes you assume I see two roads?”*

## Language Matters

-

## Rape/Battering Culture vs. Accountability Culture

---

Why doesn't she Just leave? > Why does he think its OK to beat her?

---

Why didn't she just say no? > Why didn't he make sure he had consent?

---

Some women like sex work. > Why do people think its ok to buy sex?

---

Prostitutes earn a great living. > Why do we allow poverty to exist?

---

Some women like it rough. > Why do men get aroused with violence?

---

The oldest profession. > The oldest oppression!



Language  
Matters

-

Rape/Battering  
Culture vs.  
Accountability  
Culture

---

Child pornography > Child sex  
abuse images

---

Child prostitute > Child rape victim

---

Sex work > Prostitution/ sexual  
exploitation

---

Sex worker > Prostitute/ Prostituted  
individual/ trafficked victim

---

Sex buyer/consumer/ customer >  
Abuse buyer / rapist/ perpetrator



# RUNAWAYS

“DELINQUENTS”

# Why Do They Run?

**FROM**  
something  
and not **TO**  
something

- Situation at home may be worse
- Be the true **hero**

How often  
do you ask  
what they  
are running  
**FROM?**

They are **NOT**  
a delinquent  
that needs to  
be arrested

- They are hurting and need to be rescued





BEFRIEND

INTOXICATE

ISOLATE

ALIENATE

DESENSITIZE

CAPITALIZE

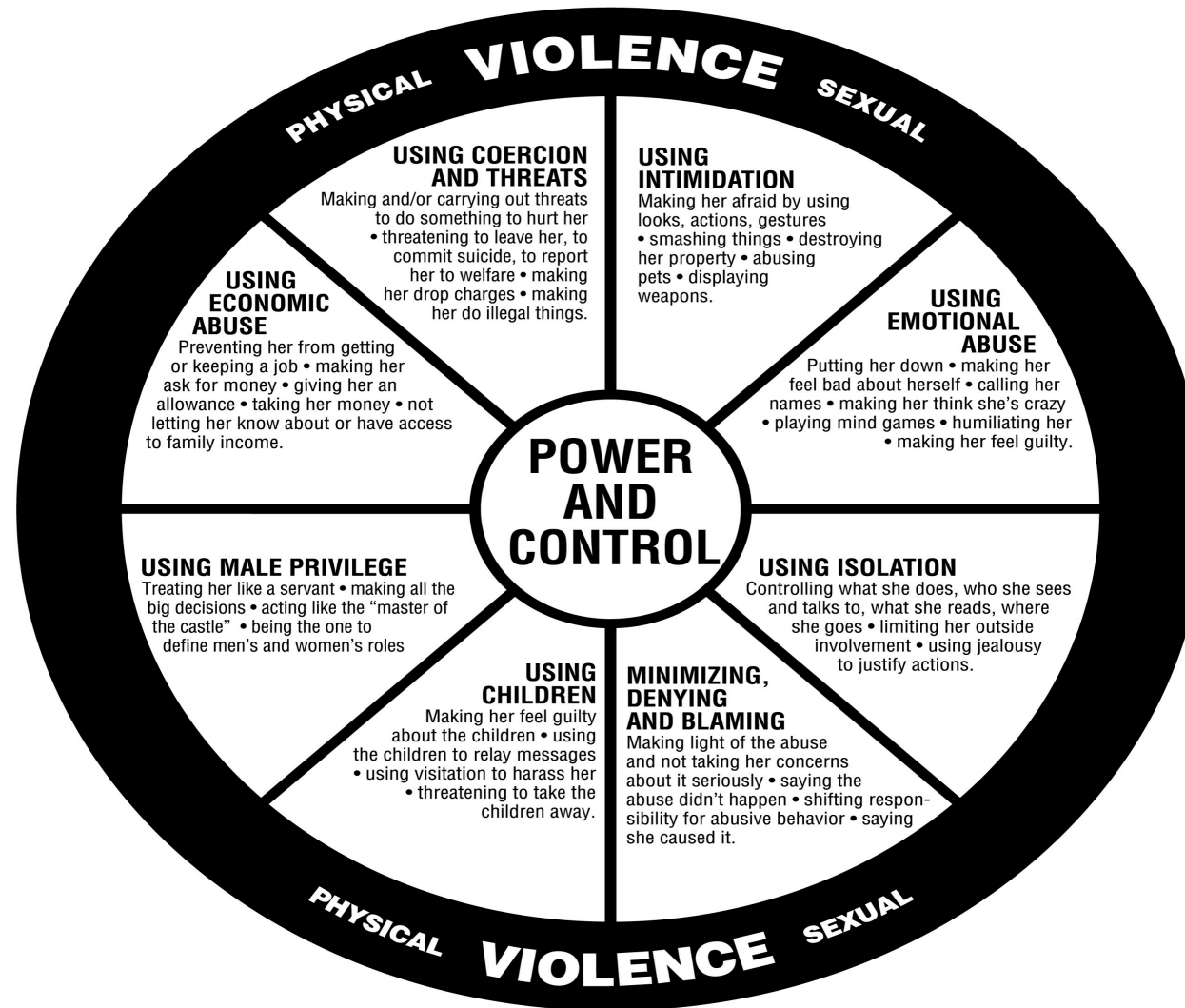
**THE  
GROOMING  
PROCESS**



# Why don't they just "Leave"

- Stockholm Syndrome
- Trauma bonding
- Lies
- Fear
- Stigma
- Permanent Health Consequences
- Hopelessness
- Shame
- Blackmail/sextortion







# Prosecution Strategies:

- ▶ Start with a baseline
- ▶ Prosecute Cases in the Context of Domestic Violence
- ▶ Use Expert Witnesses
- ▶ Know the Law, even from other jurisdictions
- ▶ Collaborate with others & support victim with wrap-around services
- ▶ Try new ways to prosecute cases Post-Crawford

# Expert Testimony

- ▶ Federal Rule of Evidence 702
  - ▶ “If scientific, technical or other specialized knowledge will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert **by knowledge, skill, experience, training or education**, may testify thereto in the form of an opinion or otherwise.



# Ask about prior witness intimidation

Start building your forfeiture by wrong doing case now.

Anticipate she will recant.

Has he ever kept you from calling the police?

Has he ever told you what would happen if you call the police?

In most states, it is a crime to **intimidate**, or **discourage**, a witness or victim from either:

reporting a crime, or testifying about a crime.



► Study on live telephone conversations between DV perpetrators

► Sought to answer how and why victims arrive at their decision to recant and/or refuse prosecution efforts

► From October 2008 to June 2011

► Qualitative study involving 25 heterosexual couples, where the male perpetrator was being held in a Detention Facility (in the U.S.) for felony-level domestic violence and made telephone calls to his female victim during the pre-prosecution period



## “Meet me at the hill where we used to park”: Interpersonal processes associated with victim recantation

Amy E. Bonomi<sup>a,\*</sup>, Rashmi Gangamma<sup>a</sup>, Chris R. Locke<sup>b</sup>, Heather Katafiasz<sup>a</sup>, David Martin<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The Ohio State University, United States

<sup>b</sup> Auburn University, United States

<sup>c</sup> King County Prosecuting Attorney, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:  
Available online 28 July 2011

Keywords:  
USA  
Domestic violence  
Intimate partner violence  
Decisions  
Gender  
Mental health

### ABSTRACT

Our study used live telephone conversations between domestic violence perpetrators and victims to answer novel questions about how and why victims arrive at their decision to recant and/or refuse prosecution efforts. From October 2008 to June 2011, we conducted a qualitative study involving 25 heterosexual couples, where the male perpetrator was being held in a Detention Facility (in the U.S.) for felony-level domestic violence and made telephone calls to his female victim during the pre-prosecution period. We used 30–192 min of conversational data for each couple to examine: 1) interpersonal processes associated with the victim's intention to recant; and 2) the couple's construction of the recantation plan once the victim intended to recant. We used constructivist grounded theory to guide data analysis, which allowed for the construction of a novel recantation framework, while acknowledging the underlying coercive interpersonal dynamic. Our results showed that consistently across couples, a victim's recantation intention was foremost influenced by the perpetrator's appeals to the victim's sympathy through descriptions of his suffering from mental and physical problems, intolerable jail conditions, and life without her. The intention was solidified by the perpetrator's minimization of the abuse, and the couple invoking images of life without each other. Once the victim arrived at her decision to recant, the couple constructed the recantation plan by redefining the abuse event to protect the perpetrator, blaming the State for the couple's separation, and exchanging specific instructions on what should be said or done. Our findings advance scientific knowledge through identifying, in the context of ongoing interactions, strategies perpetrators used—sympathy appeals and minimization—to successfully persuade their victim and strategies the couple used to preserve their relationship. Practitioners must double their efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, and efforts made to link victims to trusted advocates who can help them defend against perpetrators' sophisticated techniques.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

# Findings

- ▶ Up to 80% of victims recant.
- ▶ Witness tampering is a significant problem.
- ▶ Expect it.
- ▶ As recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court, “This particular type of crime is notoriously susceptible to intimidation or coercion of the victim to ensure she does not testify at trial” (Davis v. Washington, 126 S.Ct. 2266, 165 L Ed.2d 224, 2006)

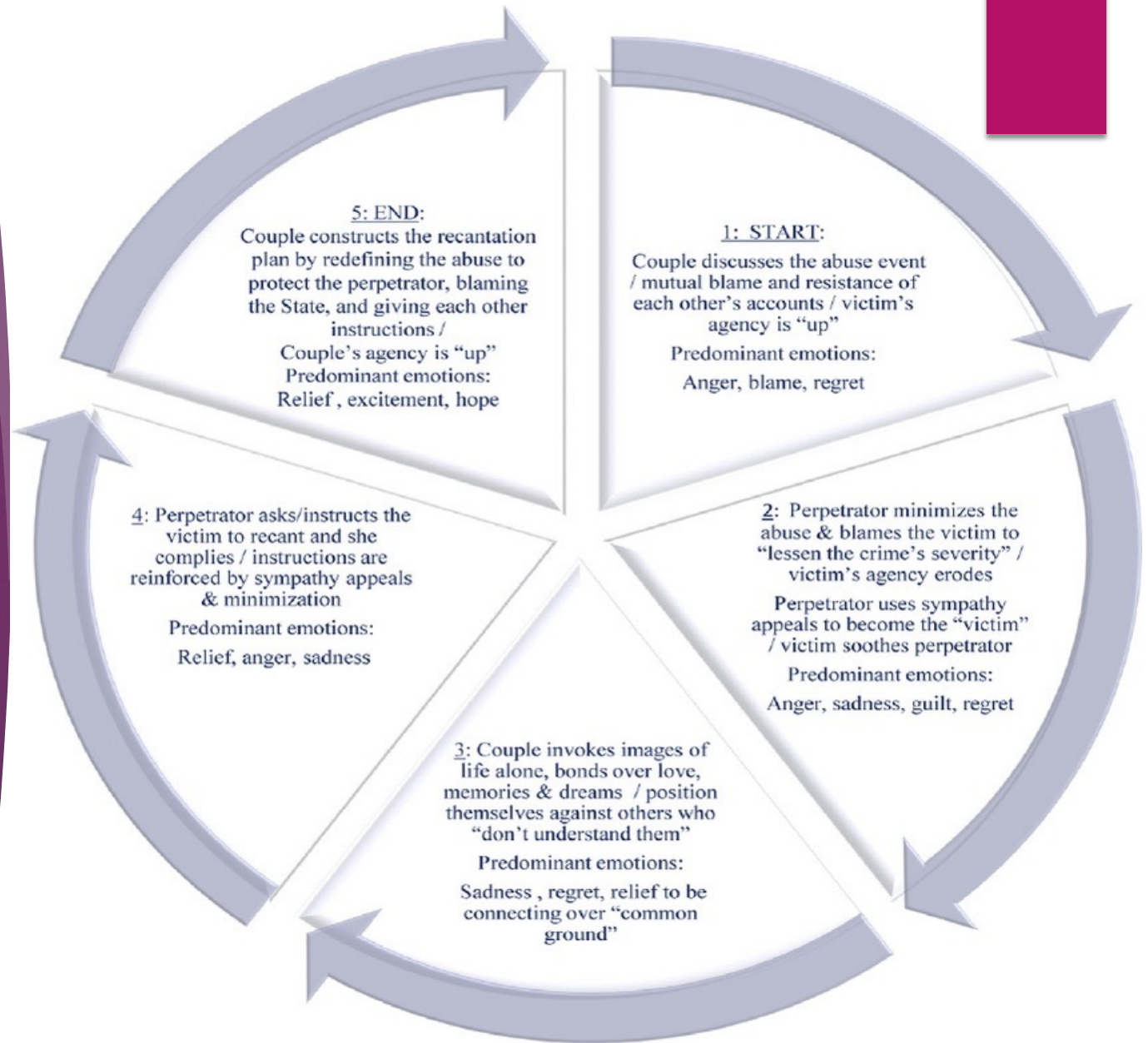
# 5 stages of Witness Intimidation

Study Of jail calls conducted Ohio/Washington (2011)

- ▶ The Victim has decided to press charges of Domestic Violence
- ▶ The abuser appeals to his victim's sympathy, love, compassion
- ▶ The abuser creates an "us against them" bond
- ▶ The abuser asks her to recant her statement
- ▶ The abuser and victim plan what she will say about not pressing charges



## ► Recantation Wheel





### Successful Trauma Informed Victim Interviewing

When gathering evidence during the investigation of sexual assault crimes, it is necessary for law enforcement and others in the criminal justice system, such as prosecutors, to ask the victim questions that they may find difficult to answer, in order to establish the facts and circumstances of a reported crime.

To build rapport and trust with victims when starting the interview, it is effective for law enforcement to acknowledge that some of the questions might seem unusual and to explain that all of the questions serve to help the interviewer understand the victim's experience of the event. Victims should also be encouraged to ask questions at the beginning and throughout if they need clarification regarding the process or the purpose of interview questions..

The phrasing of questions during victim interviews is important. Depending on how a question is asked, it might be perceived by a victim as blaming them for their actions, or for what they may be unable to recall. The following examples demonstrate how trauma-informed interview techniques can be used to reframe these questions in a manner that helps victims retrieve memories from a traumatic event and assists law enforcement in gathering more information while making the victim feel more supported and increasing the likelihood that they stay involved in the criminal justice process.

Beginning with questions such as "Where would you like to start?" or "Would you tell me what you are able to about your experience?" sets a supportive tone for the interview. Asking questions in this way also invites the victim to describe what happened, their thoughts, and their feelings in their own words, which is valuable evidence to document in the case report.

In general, law enforcement should consider reframing

- questions that start with "why";
- directives such as "explain to me..."; and
- requests for a chronological account with prompts such as "and then what happened?"

Using open-ended questions and requests when possible gives the person being interviewed the opportunity to share more information about what they are able to recall. For victims, this method helps their brain retrieve information from a traumatic event and offers them more control as they recount a time when they were violated and had no control.

This document should be used in conjunction with IACP's [Sexual Assault Guidelines and Investigative Strategies](#), [Sexual Assault Supplemental Report Form](#), [Sexual Assault Report Review Checklist](#), [Sexual Assault Policy and Training Content Guidelines](#), and [Model Policy on Investigating Sexual Assaults \(Members Only\)](#).

# New Resource from IACP

## Successful Trauma Informed Victim Interviewing

When gathering evidence during the investigation of sexual assault crimes, it is necessary for law enforcement and others in the criminal justice system, such as prosecutors, to ask the victim questions that they may find difficult to answer, in order to establish the facts and circumstances of a reported crime.

To build rapport and trust with victims when starting the interview, it is effective for law enforcement to acknowledge that some of the questions might seem unusual and to explain that all of the questions serve to help the interviewer understand the victim's experience of the event. Victims should also be encouraged to ask questions at the beginning and throughout if they need clarification regarding the process or the purpose of interview questions..

The phrasing of questions during victim interviews is important. Depending on how a question is asked, it might be perceived by a victim as blaming them for their actions, or for what they may be unable to recall. The following examples demonstrate how trauma-informed interview techniques can be used to reframe these questions in a manner that helps victims retrieve memories from a traumatic event and assists law enforcement in gathering more information while making the victim feel more supported and increasing the likelihood that they stay involved in the criminal justice process.

Beginning with questions such as "Where would you like to start?" or "Would you tell me what you are able to about your experience?" sets a supportive tone for the interview. Asking questions in this way also invites the victim to describe what happened, their thoughts, and their feelings in their own words, which is valuable evidence to document in the case report.

In general, law enforcement should consider reframing

- questions that start with "why";
- directives such as "explain to me..."; and
- requests for a chronological account with prompts such as "and then what happened?"

Using open-ended questions and requests when possible gives the person being interviewed the opportunity to share more information about what they are able to recall. For victims, this method helps their brain retrieve information from a traumatic event and offers them more control as they recount a time when they were violated and had no control.

This document should be used in conjunction with IACP's [Sexual Assault Guidelines and Investigative Strategies](#), [Sexual Assault Supplemental Report Form](#), [Sexual Assault Report Review Checklist](#), [Sexual Assault Policy and Training Content Guidelines](#), and [Model Policy on Investigating Sexual Assaults \(Members Only\)](#).

## 5.0 The Uniform

- Acknowledge the elephant in the room: you are/are not a police officer/investigator
- Counteract victims misconceptions
- Some are culturally conditioned to fear government employees
  - May not trust you due to corrupt law enforcement in their own country
- Most are reluctant to speak to someone in uniform
- Fearful of legal and safety implications for themselves or family
  - Explain that the perpetrator broke the law not the victim
- Use rehearsed stories
  - **Trauma brain post rescue vs. rehearsed post rescue**



# Making the Most of Each Opportunity

- ARREST is NOT always the answer
- **Make the most of the opportunity to catch the people who are perpetrating**
- If they are declining to talk with you and they decline help- tell them you don't to waste their time or yours and that when they are ready to get help they can call you- but you need to spend your time with others that want help
  - Avoid rabbit trails
  - Get to the point



# Approach and Rapport Building

BE NICE

Non-Judgemental

Interested

Concerned

Empathetic

# Trauma Informed Responses

- ▶ Treat all victims with respect
- ▶ Employ interview techniques that encourage victims to engage
  - ▶ Trauma informed interactions and interviews (survivor advocacy services)
  - ▶ Soft interview rooms ( **Who has heard of this?**)
  - ▶ Offer social services and resources
  - ▶ Explain that focus is on buyers and pimps
  - ▶ Understand that victims have experienced significant psychological manipulation

# Trauma Interview Insights

- Neurobiology of Trauma
- Interview victim alone (separate victim from trafficker)
- Victims have gone through a significant amount of trauma
- Victim may be hostile / afraid
- Focus on obtaining a narrative account
  - Begin a general dialogue
  - Non-leading questions
  - Non-specific **open ended** questions
  - Victim may not tell story in first person or chronological order
- Avoid derogatory terms like prostitute and delinquent



# Creating Interview Questions

- Address that this is not an interrogation, but a better way to understand the situation to best help
- **Introduce yourself with your first name rather than your rank etc.**
- Initial questioning should cover elements of the offence to cover probable cause to get warrants
- Non invasive questions asked to build rapport and gather pertinent information
- Ask questions not verbatim, but weave them into natural conversation

## Things you can say:

- ▶ I'm sorry this happened to you.
- ▶ We are here to help and make sure you're ok.
- ▶ Tell us what happened.
- ▶ I believe you.
- ▶ I'm worried about your safety and your children's safety.
- ▶ You are not responsible for your partner's violence.
- ▶ This is not your fault.
- ▶ You don't deserve this.
- ▶ It's normal to feel what you're feeling right now.

# SENSORY Interviewing:

Following the victims uninterrupted narrative. What did you.....

See

Hear

Feel

Think

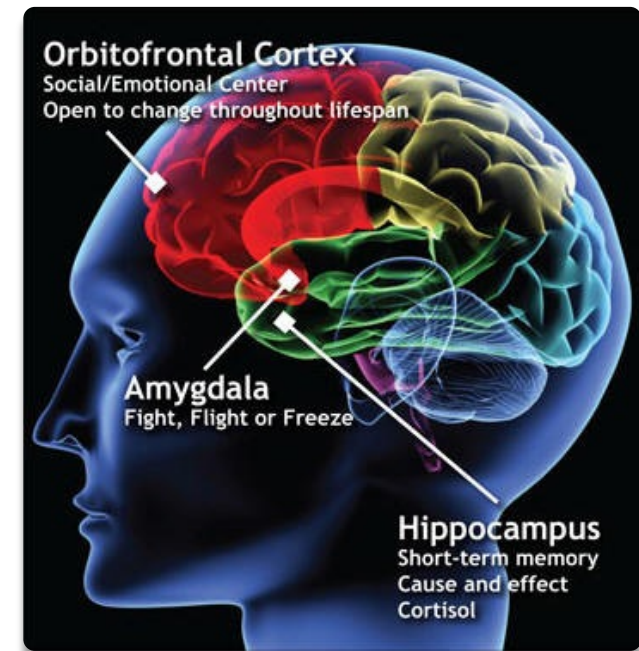
Taste

Smell



# Impact of Trauma on Memory

- ▶ Amygdala activated
- ▶ Stress hormones are released
- ▶ Functioning of hippocampus impeded – making it hard to record information in chronological order



# Hippocampus

- Most sensitive to lack of oxygen.
- Forms, organizes and stores memory
- No blood flow = Brain not working.
- No blood flow = No memory.
- No memory = Hippocampus damage



# Neurobiology of trauma

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

POST – It Notes



Give Permission  
to be confused  
and recall  
details later...

- ▶ You have been through a really difficult experience. Things may be confused and fuzzy so just do the best you can. You may remember other things later after some rest so just do the best you can for now...



# ▶ Video

# Victim Empowerment

- There is a way out
- It is not their fault
- They are not criminals they are victims
- They can have a better situation
- Discuss options for **life after the case**
- Get them in a mindset of a future framework of hope
- Prep for future interviews and case related events



# What Not to Do

- Don't promise them you can keep them safe
- Media/Press releases
  - Be cognizant of not giving pimps next moves
  - Don't expose victims to press
  - Have translators during media release
- Barriers in the criminal justice system
  - Deferred adjudication
  - Snitches get stitches

# Chain of Custody



Preservation of  
Evidence is Key during  
Raid or Sting



Date, Time and Initials




If the defense gets your  
evidence removed-  
what do you have?



Successful prosecution  
is ultimate goal of  
targeting the demand





One Eye on the Case –  
One Eye in the  
Courtroom



## High Priority Needs

---

Safety

---

Shelter

---

Basic physiological needs

---

Psychological needs / Counseling

---

**Substance abuse treatment**

# Collaboration and Utilizing Resources

- ▶ Develop relationships between LE agencies and local/national service providers
  - ▶ Some victims may need to move out of state
  - ▶ Trauma informed referrals
    - ▶ Safe houses, therapy etc
    - ▶ Survivor led or survivor informed services are ESSENTIAL
  - ▶ Many victims won't initially trust law enforcement.
    - ▶ Utilize advocates
      - ▶ NOT ALL VICTIMS IDENTIFY AS VICTIMS

# Language is Key in Trafficking



► Developing a Literacy for the Language and Terminology is KEY



# Terminology

- **Track/Blade** - Street/Area of prostitution
- **Out of Pocket** - Out of line
  - Get punished
- **Hit licks** - Sexual favors for money
  - “ I was hittin licks”
- **Trap** - Daily quota of money to make
- **Choosing Up-** Eye contact (10 toes down)
- **Stable** – Number of girls pimps keep
- **The Store** - Strip club
- **Males-** Rent Boys, House Boys, Chickens Baldies





# Terminology

- **Inside-** Escort services, internet and other in-call services
- **Outside-** Traditional track, blade or stroll
- **Carpet-** Casinos, bars, night clubs, strip clubs
- **Rack** - \$1000 cash
- **304** - Hoe ( letters to Numbers )
- **Exit Fee** – high amount the pimp will charge a victim who wants to leave



# Terminology

- **Knock her-** Steal a girl from another pimp
- **Breaking bread-** Turning over the money to the pimp
- **Pimp Code-** Giving a courtesy call when choosing up
- **The shed-** If they don't make quota they go to the "shed" and make a porn video
- **King-** Common name for a pimp (look for daddy or king in contact list)
- **Finsta or Spam-** Secret online social media accounts







# Terminology

- **Pimps**- In charge of selling victims at local level
- **Traffickers**- CEO's international buyers/sellers.
- **Madame**- Female pimp or "bottom bitch" - Trafficked victim who's been in the life for so long she's in charge and is the "mother" figure showing them the ropes
- **Johns** – The purchasers
- **Daddy**- What victims refer to their pimp as
  - FAMILY STRUCTURE
- **The Life/The Game** - Prostitution process/lifestyle

# Terminology

- **Renegade** – Person involved in prostitution without a pimp
- **Squaring up** – Attempting to escape or exit prostitution
- **Turn out** – To be forced into prostitution or someone new to prostitution
- **Reckless eyeballing** – Looking around instead of ground or choosing up by mistake
- **Pimp circle** – Several pimps encircling a victim to intimidate / threaten victim (Pimps up Ho's down)
- **Wifey or Wife in-law** - What the girls refer to each other as



# Terminology

- **Lot Lizard** – Truck stop prostitution  
Back Row ,Party Row , Pickle Park, Bunk Bunny,  
Highway Hostess
- **Kiddie Stroll** – Area of prostitution for younger victims
- **Folks / Family** – Fulfills the family need
- **Circuit** – Cities victims are moved between
- **Automatic** –Trained routine when pimp is in jail or out of town- Maintain business in loyalty or love. Money made on automatic turned over to the pimp
- **Chopped-** Getting a beating
- **Hoe partners-** Girls controlled by other pimps





# Tattoos

- Self identifying tattoos when they are expected to die within the life
- Different branding or names based on which circuit they are coming from
- Each tattoo tells a story
- Using tattoos to build rapport
  - Being excited, changing your tone
  - Building rapport
  - Helps build your story
    - Excited about 9/10 tattoos and don't talk about the 10<sup>th</sup>- Red flag

POLICE  
STOP, HT .....

Its not that  
they “wont”  
tell you, its  
because they  
cant....

# Resources for Victims



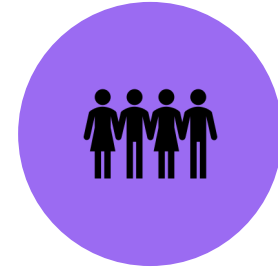
STATE AND  
GOVERNMENTAL  
RESOURCES



FAITH BASED  
ORGANIZATIONS



NGOS



COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS



# Collaboration vs. Competition

# Collaborative Approach

- Cooperation between Local, State, Federal and Tribal law enforcement is essential
- Community resources and end support for victims should occur on the onset
- Advocates ready ahead of time
- Tailor to their needs

# Coalitions and Councils

- ▶ Examples
  - ▶ HTRA
  - ▶ HRRC



# Meet Them Where They Are At



RESCUE  
America



1-713-322-8000

Barcode Hotline

# Implementing Use of Survivors



SURVIVOR INFORMED IS KEY  
TO SUCCESSFUL  
OUTCOMES



SURVIVOR ADVISORY  
COUNCILS



WHAT CAN WE DO TO  
IMPROVE



# Self Care is not Selfish, its Necessary.

- ▶ Self Care!
- ▶ Self Care!!
- ▶ Self Care!!!





# Contact/Follow Up

---

Rachel D. Fischer BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P

---

F4ischer@gmail.com

---

[www.legalRNconsult.org](http://www.legalRNconsult.org)