

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes--9/16/2006

Present: Jennifer Warren (Men's Resource Center/Women's Counseling Center), Cindy Lyndin, Paula Manley (Manley Interventions), Diana Groener (Allies in Change Counseling Center), Stacey Womack (ARMS), Matt Singleton (ARMS), Regina Rosann (ARMS), Michael Crowe (Choices), Paul Lee (Men's Resource Center), Jacquie Pancoast (Change Point), Chris Huffine (Allies in Change Counseling Center)

Minutes by Paula Manley, edited by Chris Huffine

Topic: Sexual Abuse by Romantic Partners

SPEAKER: Cathy Robart, SARC (Sexual Assault Resource Center), Portland, 503-640-5311
Cathy is an outreach coordinator. Much of her work involves presenting to high school health classes.

SARC Services

SARC serves survivors of sexual assault and their families. 24-hour crisis line. SARC is confidential, and focuses on Washington County, although is not exclusive to that county. SARC serves victims including ages 13-18 and are not mandatory reporters. They do advocacy and offer resources and referrals. SARC has free one-on-one counseling and support groups for survivors of sexual assault for women, teenage girls and family members. They are working on funding for men, as well. There is a section of men's services in their resource referral list. SARC accompanies victims to hospitals. Clients include many women who are victims of DV. They do medical and other advocacy, and may sit with a survivor throughout the trial of the perpetrator. SARC works with the shelters. The goal is to get people in a safe space - physically - in their lives and then can work on the counseling. SARC refers to two counselors for AMAC counseling. Everyone who calls in is offered a "survivor packet" which includes services plus information to help them.

Demographics

Marital Rape Law was imposed in 1978. Before that, there was a law that a man cannot rape his wife. Since then, all states have some kind of marital rape law. Some states, however, seem to have loopholes. We are fighting against hundreds of years of legal dogma. Per the Department of Justice in 2004, people who are experiencing domestic violence are 60% more likely to be sexually abused. The percentage is higher in sexual minorities, when they are involved in domestically violent relationships. 75% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by people the victims know. Someone who is molested as a child is more likely to be assaulted as an adult. People who are more likely to disclose are those who experience stranger violence. It is less frequent that victims in an abusive intimate relationship will report. Most victims of domestic violence are also victims of sexual assault by their partner. Therefore, it would be helpful to have partner info geared this way. Among teens, the majority have experienced some kind of sexual assault or harassment. This may include inappropriate touching in the halls. Sexual harassment is very

common in middle schools and high schools. One to 3% of all reported assaults are false reports.

Sexual assault defined

Sexual assault = any unwanted sexual behavior. Any action of a sexual nature without consent. Consent means "yes" without misinformation, age restriction, mental incapacity, coercion, alcohol/drugs, dependence (chemical, \$, emotional). Contrary to popular opinion, sexual assault is primarily about power and control, not sexual desire, although there is a sexual element in the assault. Abusers can be physically turned on by imposing power over and control of the victim. Victims can experience physical pleasure even though they don't want the sex. This is used against them by the perpetrator to convince them they wanted it.

Examples of sexual abuse

Some men start an argument so their partner will submit to sex to placate them with "make-up sex." The victim may submit because she feels it's better than him beating her, or hurting her children. He may force her to submit to unwanted acts - by threatening to going to the sex industry if she doesn't. She feels if she isn't available all the time that he will go back to the sex industry. There are also implied threats that lead to her doing what she doesn't want to in order to avoid that. She may have to submit to sexual behaviors she does not wish to engage in (e.g., oral sex, multiple partner sex or pornography). Also, men may withhold sex to punish her when she doesn't do what he wants. Other forms of punishment include silence, whining, complaining, badgering, not letting her sleep, etc. if she doesn't submit. This is common with DV perpetrators. Men will say they never have had un-consensual sex, ignoring the former abusive behaviors. Other forms of abuse include putting down her sexual performance, bringing up past sexual relationships. Forcing, coercing, intimidating people to have sex are obvious. But also damaging are the more passive areas - refusing to share sexual history, information about STDs, refusing to use condoms, refusing to let the other people use birth control, making denigrating comments about a person's body.

Domestic violence and reduced sexual desire

One minute a man may tell the woman he loves her, then the next day will be calling her names. Even though she may love him, and want to be intimate with him, this confusion, fear, and/or hurt may make her reluctant to have relations with him. Men need to understand how their abusive behavior is killing her desire. If men can understand the dynamics of arousal, it is more likely to impact their beliefs and behavior. ARMS discusses how biblically, sex is supposed to be giving, not taking. In Latino culture, if you can tie it to "what if this was your daughter, or mother being treated this way?" Important question if man denies any sexual violence ever - do the circumstances show that she would feel safe in saying "no" to sex? This can be particularly effective during the presentation of the letter of accountability.

Educating people about sexual assault

One important aspect of understanding sexual assault is identifying issues of power and vulnerability. For example, asking people what males have to do to protect themselves from a sexual assault, which is typically a very short list, verses what females have to do to protect

themselves from a sexual assault. Less theories, more personal examples works well in raising awareness. We need to pair sex with affection. Teens are taught that abstinence is the only option. When discussing abstinence, is it making a choice or just turning a cold shoulder to someone? It is important to discuss with adolescents when refusing to be sexually appropriate (i.e., when they do not want to be sexual) and when is it an abusive control tactic (i.e., when it is used to punish or hurt the other). Much of what children see are pictures of power and control. "Friends with benefits" is a more common subculture, as is S&M. If this is consensual in both directions, that is different from coercion. However, another part of this is to be part of certain peer groups, many youth have to submit to that type of behavior.

Services for victims of sexual assault

In Oregon, Rape/Sexual Assault, if under age 18, they have until age 24 to make a report. If 18 or over when assaulted, they have six years from the time they are assaulted to take legal action. In the case of repressed memories, there may be some difference in this. Medically, about 60% of survivors, in the general population, sustain no physical injuries whatever. Only 2% have even lacerations or cuts. Most of those 2% are likely DV. In going to the hospital, there is the SAVE (Sexual Assault Victims Emergency Fund) fund. They can receive free medical care and treatment for any injuries. Can get a free exam, free pregnancy testing, and free access to Plan B (morning-after pill), if not pregnant at the time. Victims can get free STI testing, and if positive, can get prophylaxis. It does not include AIDS testing. This is paid for by private donations and fines from sexual assault cases. It does not require that they file a report. This is not limited to services that may be covered by their own health insurance. It is available and confidential to all victims of sexual assault age 18 or over, whether DV or not. (But not to non-sexual assault DV victims.) Anyone 15 or older is eligible for this, but because of mandatory reporting, not confidential for under 18. This is a partial exam, which can be done without reporting. The rest is available if they report the assault. Non-sexually assaulted victims can access Planned Parenthood for services.