

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION

Resource Sharing Project



Sexual Assault Services Program

Glossary for State SASP Administrators

This glossary is to assist SASP administrators in understanding the broader context of sexual violence. These terms are not intended to replace legislative definitions within grant contracts or guidance, but to offer deeper knowledge and insight into sexual assault programs and the language they use.

Term	Definition
The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)	The Violence Against Women Act (U.S. Congress, 2013) was first passed by Congress in 1994 and was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013. VAWA has made significant funding available to address sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking and dating violence. Funding has been targeted to services for survivors as well as systems change initiatives to enhance the community response to survivors. While named the Violence Against Women Act, male survivors of this violence also come under the umbrella of services. In addition to funding, VAWA has prompted significant federal law and policy change to ensure best practices in response to these crimes, e.g. polygraphing of sexual assault survivors cannot be used to determine whether or not to move forward with a case; survivors cannot be billed for rape kit exams out of pocket costs; survivors

	<p>do not have to report the assault to law enforcement in order to have payment of the exam costs covered. Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) is funding specifically designated under VAWA to support community based advocacy services for survivors.</p>
<p>Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)</p>	<p>The Office on Violence Against Women was created in 1995 and is an agency within the Department of Justice. OVW administers financial and technical assistance to communities across the country that are developing programs, policies, and practices aimed at ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. OVW administers both formula-based and discretionary grant programs, established under VAWA and subsequent legislation. The four formula programs are STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors), SASP (Sexual Assault Services Program), State Coalitions, and Tribal Coalitions. The discretionary programs work to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable through promoting a coordinated community response. The mission of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, is to provide federal leadership in developing the national capacity to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. (U.S. Department of Justice).</p>
<p>Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP)</p>	<p>Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program is the first federal funding stream solely dedicated to the provision of direct intervention and related assistance for victims of sexual assault. The SASP Formula Grant Program directs grant dollars to states and territories to assist them in supporting rape crisis centers and other nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations or tribal programs that provide services, direct intervention, and</p>

	<p>related assistance to victims of sexual assault. Funds provided through SASP are designed to supplement other funding sources directed at addressing sexual assault on the state and territorial level. (U.S. Department of Justice).</p>
<p>Services-Training-Officers-Prosecution (STOP)</p>	<p>STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program, awarded to states and territories, enhances the capacity of local communities to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to combat violent crimes against women and to develop and strengthen victim services in cases involving violent crimes against women. Each state and territory must allocate 25 percent for law enforcement, 25 percent for prosecutors, 30 percent for victim services (of which at least 10 percent must be distributed to culturally specific community-based organizations), 5 percent to state and local courts, and 15 percent for discretionary distribution. (U.S. Department of Justice).</p>
<p>State and Territorial Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions Grant Program</p>	<p>State and Territorial Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions Program provides grants to each state domestic violence coalition (determined by the Department of Health and Human Services) and sexual assault coalition (determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) for the purposes of coordinating victim services activities and collaborating and coordinating with federal, state, and local entities engaged in addressing violence against women. Statewide sexual assault coalitions provide direct support to member rape crisis centers through funding, training and technical assistance, public awareness activities, and public policy advocacy. Statewide domestic violence coalitions provide comparable support to member battered women’s shelters and other domestic violence victim service providers. (U.S.</p>

	Department of Justice).
Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Grant Program	Grants to Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Program support the development and operation of nonprofit, nongovernmental tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions. Tribal coalitions provide education, support, and technical assistance to member Indian service providers and tribes to enhance their response to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Eligible applicants must meet the statutory definition of a “tribal coalition.” (U.S. Department of Justice).
The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)	The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) is a federal law that passed in 2003 (U.S. Congress, 2003). PREA requires all states to enact protections for those who experience sexual violence in any detention facility (prison, jail, INS detention, juvenile detention, etc.). PREA calls for formal working relationships between detention facilities and advocacy organizations to ensure that survivors have access to community-based advocacy, support and access to victim rights. In addition to providing advocacy to survivors in detention facilities, PREA also directs facilities to work to prevent future assaults.
Victims of Crimes Act (VOCA)	The Victims of Crimes Act funding is a unique fund source that is administered by the federal government. VOCA funds come from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalty fees, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorney's Offices, U.S. Courts, and the Bureau of Prisons. These dollars come from offenders convicted of Federal crimes, not from taxpayers. VOCA funds support core advocacy services for all types of crime victims. (U.S. Department of Justice).

<p>Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)</p>	<p>The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is committed to enhancing the Nation’s capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.</p> <p>OVC is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice and was established in 1988 through an amendment to the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, OVC is charged by Congress with administering the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund). Through OVC, the Fund supports a broad array of programs and services that focus on helping victims in the immediate aftermath of crime and continuing to support them as they rebuild their lives. Millions of dollars are invested annually in victim compensation and assistance in every U.S. state and territory, as well as for training, technical assistance, and other capacity-building programs designed to enhance service providers’ ability to support victims of crime in communities across the Nation. (U.S. Department of Justice).</p>
<p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</p>	<p>The CDC is one of the major operating components of the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC increases the health security of our nation. As the nation’s health protection agency, CDC saves lives and protects people from health threats. To accomplish their mission, CDC conducts critical science and provides health information that protects our nation against expensive and dangerous health threats, and responds when these arise (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).</p>
<p>Rape Prevention and Education Program</p>	<p>The Rape Prevention and Education program provides funding from the CDC to state health departments in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of</p>

	<p>Northern Mariana Islands. RPE grantees work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, including state sexual violence coalitions, educational institutions, law enforcement entities, rape crisis centers, community organizations and others to guide implementation of their state sexual violence prevention plans. These collaborations have strengthened states' sexual violence prevention systems, leveraging resources and enhancing prevention opportunities (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).</p>
Title IX	<p>A section of the Education Amendments of 1972 to the US Civil Rights Act. Title IX is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individuals effective protection against those practices. Title IX has been most often understood as the impetus to support equal access to and quality of athletic activities for girls/women in educational institutions. Recently, however, there has been an enhanced focus on Title IX as the legal impetus to challenge the response of educational institutions to incidents of sexual assault/violence on school campuses. The absent or poor response to reports of gender violence such as rape on campus creates a hostile environment that in fact discriminates against female students. The resulting harm for students is in violation of the protection that Title IX seeks to ensure. The powerful "Dear Colleague" letter issued by the Department of Education in 2011 makes a strong case for citing the broad incidence of sexual violence on campus as a failure of compliance with Title IX putting access to</p>

	<p>federal funds in jeopardy (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).</p>
<p>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</p>	<p>It is the mission of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to enhance and protect the health and well-being of all Americans. The mission is fulfilled by providing for effective health and human services and fostering advances in medicine, public health, and social services (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).</p>
<p>Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)</p>	<p>The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) is administered from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is the primary federal funding stream dedicated to the support of emergency shelter and related assistance for victims of domestic violence and their children. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).</p>
<p>Sexual Violence</p>	<p>A spectrum of any sexual act committed against someone without that person’s freely given consent. The spectrum defines the full range of experiences that are included under sexual violence- when a sexual act is used as a tool of violence, humiliation, or degradation. Some of those experiences are not considered criminal violations in most states, even though they may be experienced as violating or threatening.</p>
<p>Consent</p>	<p>This is the very crux of the understanding of sexual violence and the survivor/survivor’s experience. Consent is the voluntary, positive agreement between individuals to engage in specific sexual activity. Lack of agreement or silence is not consent; not fighting back is not consent; having consented in that past is not consent now; consent to activity A is not consent to activity B; being unable to give or withhold consent (because of cognitive disability, for example, or being</p>

	<p>intoxicated) is not consent. Giving in is not the same as giving consent – it may be a survival strategy, an attempt to avoid worse harm, or a sign that a survivor senses there are no other options. Consent is often misunderstood by the general public, helping responders and survivors themselves. Consent is an active, not a passive agreement.</p>
Victim	<p>A person who has been subjected to an act of sexual violence. This term is related to the criminal legal system’s understanding of someone who has been the target of a crime. This term is often used in the field interchangeably with survivor or simultaneously with survivors as in victim/survivor.</p>
Survivor	<p>A person who has been subjected to an act of sexual violence and chooses to identify not as a victim but as someone with self-agency, strength, and resilience. Typically, this term is preferred by someone who is past the initial response to the assault/violence, feels as if they have progressed through a healing process and are less defined by the violence than by their ability to move forward.</p>
Rape Culture	<p>Rape culture is a term that was coined by feminists in the United States in the 1970’s. It was designed to show the ways in which society blamed survivors of sexual assault and normalized male sexual violence. Rape culture is understood as a complex set of beliefs that encourage sexual aggression and supports sexual violence. It is a society that values silence, secrecy, and privacy so that incidents of sexual violence remain hidden. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, targets of rape perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional</p>

	terrorism against women and other vulnerable groups as the norm. In a rape culture, both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable (Buckwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 2005, p. xi).
Community Based Advocate	A person who is specially trained to provide survivor-centered support, information, and referral to those who have been or care for someone who has been subjected to sexual violence. Advocates provide support that is grounded in the survivor's self-identified needs, ensures that survivors have the resources to make well-informed decisions about their care and options, ensures compliance with victim's rights laws and honors the survivor's resiliency and right to exercise control over their lives. Advocates work closely with community providers such as mental health therapists, medical and criminal legal professionals to ensure that survivors have trauma informed and competent care. In many communities, survivors can speak with advocates with legally protected confidentiality.
Systems Based Advocates	Systems-based advocates are employed by a specific agency, typically a prosecutor's office, but sometimes by a law enforcement, probation, corrections department, or military system. System-based advocates generally serve as the primary contact for victims and community-based advocates with that particular criminal legal agency, provide information and support, but most often cannot provide confidential communication to survivors.
Perpetrator	The term more generally used to identify someone who has and continues to commit sexual offenses whether or not they have been identified in or to the system. This is a term used by the CDC and in most research. Much like the above term, it is a catchall and is not

	<p>particularly helpful as it misses the nuance of who the individual is behind the label. This term gained a questionable connotation after the popular reality TV show <i>To Catch a Perpetrator</i>. As with survivor, consider using language that highlights the individual – e.g. rather than sex offender or perpetrator try “an individual who has sexually abused” labeling the behavior rather than the individual.</p>
<p>People who Sexually Offend</p>	<p>This is a primarily legal term typically used for a person who has committed an act of sexual violence and is being held accountable in the criminal legal system. Sex offenders are varied in their motives, actions, choice of survivors, use of violence or coercion, risk to the broad community and treatability yet this term is used as an umbrella for all and is in that respect not entirely meaningful. Public perception of sex offenders is skewed by a broad and scientifically unsupported perception that they are all sick, monsters, and untreatable. Using person first language and focusing on the behavior in question can help to change this perception and support survivors. By far most offenders are acquaintances, friends, and family members of those whom they assault. Research supports that treatment and supervision of known sex offenders can be successful. The issue of who sex offenders are and how they should be handled is a complex one.</p>
<p>Abuse Reactive</p>	<p>The term applied primarily to children/juveniles who, as a result of having been subjected to sexual abuse in childhood, engage in highly sexualized behavior. Instead of being understood primarily as sex offenders, abuse reactive children/juveniles are acting out on a learned behavior from the abuse they experienced and treatment for their early abuse and sexually aggressive behavior is indicated. Abuse reactive behavior that is harmful to another is not excused by their early</p>

	<p>victimization; rather that frame helps us understand the origins of the behavior. Rather than using this label, a better description would be “a child/juvenile with sexual behavior problems” or “sexually aggressive or sexually abusive adolescent.”</p>
<p>Ethics</p>	<p>This describes a code that is adopted by a field to define parameters of behavior that is appropriate, legitimate, and authentic to the work of the field. Every advocacy agency should have a code of ethics in place to guide their work. For sexual assault advocates, a code of ethics commonly calls for expert capacity of the organization in all of its work; integrity to the concepts of survivor-centered, trauma informed responses and honoring the individual’s self-agency; responsibility to the highest standards of the field; a commitment to serve all survivors in culturally responsive and appropriate ways; maintaining appropriate boundaries; rigorously guarding a survivor’s privacy; maintaining a commitment to see sexual violence within the larger context of the use of sexual acts to limit the options of entire classes of people; and to be an agent of change.</p>
<p>Confidentiality</p>	<p>Keeping private and safe all identifying information about a survivor is the demand of confidentiality. Confidentiality is typically defined by state statute and funder guidelines and is designed to meet a major fear of most sexual assault survivors that once they tell their story anywhere, their privacy is compromised. Confidentiality is a closely guarded principle in the advocacy world. If an advocacy program cannot guarantee confidentiality, it will not be seen as a true resource in a community.</p>
<p>Privileged Communication</p>	<p>The legal status that some professionals, including advocates in some states, can claim to argue against sharing confidential survivor information without</p>

	<p>approval from the subject of the information. Think of attorney/client privilege; doctor/patient privilege; minister/congregant privilege. Some states, by statute or rule, allow advocates to claim privileged communication status if they meet certain qualifications such as training, location of work and supervision. Someone who has been granted this status typically cannot be subpoenaed to testify in court.</p>
<p>Mandated Reporting</p>	<p>Mandated reporting refers to those circumstances where the law has identified that the safety of the individual cannot be assumed. These circumstances typically apply to minors, people with disabilities, or the elderly. In these instances, mandated reporters must notify the relevant state agency and the survivor's privacy cannot be guaranteed. This process allows for the state to step in and take over the role of protector. In many states, simply being a minor who is a survivor of sexual assault is not sufficient to warrant a mandated report. Where it is indicated, however, an advocate must be prepared to follow the law following the agency's policy.</p>
<p>Trauma Informed Services</p>	<p>An approach to advocacy and other services that is grounded in an understanding of the impact of trauma such as sexual violence on the survivor. Trauma informed services are informed by research that identifies the neurophysiological adaptations the brain makes when survival is paramount and how those adaptations recur when similar threats seem imminent.</p>
<p>Triggers</p>	<p>Individuals who have been traumatized by incidents of sexual violence can experience a return to the sense of impending danger by sensory stimulants (smells, sights, sounds, being in a confined space, etc.) that are connected with the circumstances and experience of the original sexual assault. These stimuli, called triggers,</p>

	<p>can cause the survival system to set in motion just as it did during the original experience of trauma. Survivors often learn what their triggers are and work to avoid them.</p>
<p>Historical Trauma</p>	<p>Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma (Brave Heart-Jordan, 1985).</p> <p>Historical trauma is related to a genocide of a people, where some major event is aimed at a particular group because of their status as an oppressed group. The events and experiences most commonly associated with historical trauma include slavery, the experiences of Native Americans after/during colonization, and the Holocaust. (Coyle, 2014)</p>
<p>Intergenerational Trauma</p>	<p>Intergenerational trauma affects one family. While each generation of that family may experience its own form of trauma, the first experience can be traced back decades. It refers to someone who may have experienced their own trauma but also have come from a family where there was a trauma in their parents and/or often in their grandparents. (Coyle, 2014)</p>
<p>Healing</p>	<p>Healing is an acknowledgement of the process that survivors go through to restore their health and wellbeing after a devastating event. Healing is typically thought of as restoring the mind, body, and spirit to wholeness. In no way does this imply that sexual assault survivors are damaged or unwell. They have suffered trauma but their inherent strength can be reclaimed through the healing process. The healing process is different for each individual and can be strengthened by the family, community, and social supports surrounding the survivor.</p>

<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>The process of helping return choice, agency, and control to those who were subjected to sexual violence and in the process lost their sense of control over their circumstances, environment, and most importantly their own bodies. It is important to understand that “empowerment” is not something an advocate “gives.” It is the advocate’s role to create an environment that honors the survivor’s ability to identify their needs and engage their own agency to meet their needs. It recognizes the survivor’s resiliency and capacity to identify what will be useful/helpful for them in the healing process. In effect, they are supported in becoming their own advocate.</p>
<p>Resilience</p>	<p>Closely related to both healing and empowerment, resilience refers to that quality of inner strength that defines an individual’s ability to adapt well to and overcome adversity.</p>
<p>Oppression</p>	<p>The systematic, institutionalized, unjust, or cruel exercise of authority or mistreatment of one group of people by another group of people, based on historical and current structures in society. People oppressed are excluded from resources, benefits (safety is a benefit) and/or opportunities in society. In this field, we understand that acts of sexual violence become the tools of oppression, and not only sexist oppression. Oppression is the system of power that excuses, justifies, or ignores harm of those with less power. It is well known that groups with less power, or oppressed groups, such as children, females, people with disabilities, people of color, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) people, inmates, people living in poverty, immigrants/refugees, or those on the losing side in a war experience sexual violence at rates higher than the majority population. The sexual assault advocacy field understands this not a result of an innate</p>

	<p>flaw in those communities. Rather we understand that offenses against members of these communities are more likely to go unaddressed, uninvestigated, and unseen because of how these communities are marginalized.</p>
Racism	<p>A form of oppression based on race – the belief that some people are innately superior to others due to racial characteristics plus the social/political power to act on that belief and deny rights access to social capital.</p>
Classism	<p>A form of oppression based on social class – the belief that those with wealth, family heritage and social standing in a community are superior to others and the power to act on that belief and deny rights and access to social capital.</p>
Sexism	<p>A form of oppression based on gender – the belief that there is a superior gender and the power to act on that belief and deny access to social capital. Sexism also contributes to the oppression of gender non-conforming individuals assuming that there are only two distinct genders in the human population.</p>
Heterosexism	<p>A form of oppression based on sexual orientation – the belief that straight people are superior to gay people and the power to act on that belief and deny rights and access to social capital.</p>
Ableism	<p>A form of oppression based on ability – the belief that people with physical, developmental and emotional disabilities are inferior to fully abled people and the power to act on that belief and deny rights and access to social capital.</p>
Ageism	<p>A form of oppression based on prejudice or</p>

	discrimination based on age, most often elderly but also children and youth. Young and old people are seen as less capable, not capable of self-determination, not having the right to act on their own behalf.
Religious Discrimination	A form of oppression based on practice of or devotion to religion that is not seen to be part of a traditional religious tradition in the United States. Those who follow traditional religious practices are superior and have access to rights and social capital.
Restorative Justice	A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders (Centre of Justice and Reconciliation, 2015).
Transformative Justice	Community-based responses/interventions to violence that do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, criminal-legal system) or perpetual systemic violence (e.g. oppression, vigilantism) (GenerationFIVE, 2013).
Community Accountability	Community accountability is a community-based strategy, rather than a police/prison-based strategy, to address violence within our communities (INCITE, 2005).

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