

National Coordination Committee on the AI/AN SANE-SART Initiative Issue Paper, Sub Issue #1: Written Sexual Violence Response Protocols

Key Question for Committee To Address: *How can OVC and its partners help support effective protocols being developed, adopted, and implemented across AI/AN communities?*

Definition: *Protocols are written agreements between agencies about the provision of sexual assault services and the roles and responsibilities of core responders in providing those services. Ultimately, protocols allow agencies to institutionalize interagency roles and responsibilities to maintain high-quality, consistent responses over the long term.*

Elements of Effective Protocols: *Effective protocols include appropriate, written Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) that detail each agency's roles and responsibilities in relation to sexual violence response. Protocols should also highlight the importance of and ways to ensure that victims receive culturally relevant services.*

Challenges of Protocol Development: *OVC and its partners have learned from working group members and demonstration sites that some of the challenges that impact the development of strong written sexual violence response protocols may include: misunderstanding of roles, responsibilities, and who has the authority to act; a sense of helplessness about the ability to effectively address and end sexual violence, given its prevalence; a lack of designated personnel to address sexual violence; and "turf issues" and/or mistrust among partners.*

Background

Coordinated community responses, most notably SARTs and multidisciplinary teams, which have strong, written response protocols, are regarded as a best practice approach for addressing sexual violence and providing seamless, victim-centered services. By listening to diverse perspectives from the federal working groups—Child Sexual Abuse, Alaska Native Issues, and First Responders—and three demonstration sites, OVC and its partners learned that, in the absence of written sexual violence protocols, AI/AN victims of sexual violence do not receive victim-centered, coordinated community responses.

Discussion

Comprehensive protocols can alleviate barriers and historical misunderstandings; maintain momentum during staff transitions; clearly illustrate the role of each agency or service in responding to victims of sexual assault; promote policies designed to reach underserved or unserved populations; foster interagency communication; enhance multidisciplinary working relationships; educate the community at large on the issue of sexual violence; provide quality control mechanisms for service delivery; and provide parameters for resolving emerging issues.

Preparation for Committee Recommendations

We are interested in receiving recommendations from the Committee members on how OVC and its partners can support the efforts of protocol development. Committee members are encouraged to discuss these questions with their respective organizations and/or tribal communities prior to the meeting and come ready to share those experiences, information/data, and recommendations at the meeting.

Proposed General Questions on Protocol

- What do written sexual violence protocols, with appropriate MOUs/ MOAs, which include all key first responder stakeholders, look like for your organization or the tribal communities with which you work? Please explain.
- How has protocol development impacted your organization or the tribal communities with which you work? Please provide any specific examples or data/information you have that would help clarify collaboration and its impact.
- What are the key barriers to the development of effective protocols among key first responder stakeholders in your community? How could they be addressed?
- Are there any examples of how your organization, or the tribal communities with which you work, has successfully implemented or supported protocol development around sexual violence response?
- What initial recommendations do you have on how OVC and its partners can support the efforts of protocol development in AI/AN communities? How can other stakeholders better support the efforts of protocol development?
- What additional resources would be helpful to you and the Committee in considering a protocol's impact and developing recommendations for protocol development at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels? Do you have any suggestions on how to best access that information?

Research/Resources on Sexual Violence Response

- SART Toolkit section on Protocols (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/sartkit/develop/plan-protocols.html>)
- Tribal Law and Policy Institute's SART Manual (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/sartkit/develop/plan-protocols.html>)
- Oversight and Better Collaboration Needed for Sexual Assault Investigations and Adjudications, (2011), (www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-579).