

Unit 4: Assault



Time Required: 2.5 hours

Resources Needed

- *OVC Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD (clip: Assault/Alan)
- *Participant Workbook*
- TV and DVD player
- Chalkboard or tear sheets

Prior to the Session

- Consider gathering local and state statistics and/or newspaper or magazine articles for the discussion about assault trends.
- Research your state's statutes related to assault; be prepared to provide information to participants about these statutes.
- Find a newspaper or Internet story about an assault victim and make enough copies to give to each participant or to several small groups. (This is for Activity B at the end of the unit.)

Objectives

- Define **assault** and **posttraumatic stress disorder**.
- Describe current trends for assault.
- Provide examples of assault.
- Explain the impact of assault on victims.
- Discuss thoughts and feelings about being held accountable for assault.



Facilitator Tip

Participants may rationalize that some assaults are mutual fights, that the victim "deserved it," or that the act was committed in self-defense. Facilitators should keep the focus on the impact of assault on the victim.



What Is Assault?

The legal definitions of **assault** vary from state to state; however, there are two general categories:

Aggravated assault is used to define an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault usually is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

Simple assault is used to define assaults and attempted assaults where no weapon was used or no serious or aggravated injury resulted to the victim. Stalking, intimidation, coercion, and hazing are included.

The number of assaults is much higher than the number of homicides in the United States. And, like other violent crimes, victims know their attackers more often than not. More than half of all assaults occur in the victim's home; at a relative's, friend's, or neighbor's home; or on the street near the victim's home. Many juvenile assault victims say the first assault they remember occurred in their homes. In these cases, the attackers generally were family members, friends, and acquaintances.

Victims may be threatened or attacked by offenders who have guns, baseball bats, knives, or other objects used as weapons. They may also be slapped, punched, or kicked. Victims' physical injuries include broken bones, serious bruises and sprains, lost teeth, internal injuries, and loss of consciousness. Even if assault victims are not subjected to serious injuries or losses, they may suffer intense fear, threats of additional violence, and physical harm at the hands of their assailants.

Assault victims often experience shock, ongoing fear, distress, or a loss of their sense of reality. They may experience flashbacks, anxiety, or an inability to concentrate. These reactions and feelings, which are common responses to a traumatic event, may occur over many months or years and may be diagnosed as posttraumatic stress disorder.



Have participants read the “Words To Know” aloud.

Delivery options include reading the words aloud yourself, writing the words on a chalkboard or tear sheet, selecting participants to read the words aloud, or dividing participants into small groups or pairs and having them discuss the terms among themselves. For all options, survey participants to ensure they understand the terms before moving on.



Words To Know

Aggravated assault: An unlawful attack for the purpose of inflicting severe bodily injury. This assault usually involves a weapon or other means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): The National Center for PTSD defines this disorder as a reliving or re-experiencing of a traumatic event accompanied by increased arousal and avoidance of anything associated with the event.

Simple assault: An attack on someone that does not involve a dangerous weapon and does not result in serious injury.



In the News: Assault Trends

This section offers recent statistics about assault. If you gathered local and state statistics, integrate them into your discussion on assault trends. If you found newspaper or magazine articles relevant to the topic area, read them aloud or assign participants into groups of three to discuss and then present the information to the larger group.

When discussing assault trends—

- Select participants to read the assault trends aloud.
- Use local news articles, reviewing them carefully to avoid overly complex issues. Make sure the articles do not identify offenders in your facility or victims in your community.
- Have participants discuss any facts of which they weren't aware or those that bothered them the most.
- Come up with additional questions, if desired.

Examples of Assault

The *Participant Workbook* provides definitions of types of assault, as well as example scenarios involving the crime; consider asking participants to substitute the names of their family members or friends in the scenarios. You can also share any state-specific statutes you found that are related to assault.

Delivery options include taking turns with the participants in reading the scenarios aloud, selecting participants to read the scenarios, and dividing participants into small groups or pairs to discuss the scenarios.

Refer back to “Words To Know” as they appear in the scenarios. Solicit feedback by asking the following questions: “Who was the primary victim?” “Who else may have been harmed by the offender?” “How was the victim harmed?” and “What do you think the victim is experiencing?” Add details to the scenarios. Encourage note taking.



Triad Session

Have participants write down their answers to the questions under each type of assault. Then, in groups of three, have participants share their responses with one another and offer feedback. Finally, bring the larger group back together to review and discuss participants' responses. Ask additional questions, if warranted, such as “Who was the primary victim?” “Who else may have been harmed by the offender?” “How was the victim harmed?” and “What do you think the victim is experiencing?”



Group Discussion

Have volunteers read aloud the four quotes by assault victims in their workbooks. As a group, discuss the impact of victimization on these individuals. Ask participants to consider how they would feel if the assaults had happened to their friends or family members.

What Is the Impact of Assault?

Criminal behavior such as assault creates a ripple effect throughout the following areas in victims' lives: financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual.



Chalkboard Exercise

Have participants take turns reading from the areas of impact lists in their workbooks. Solicit additional examples from the group.

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage loss • Prescription medications • Counseling • Job loss • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paralysis • Ulcers • Loss of control of bodily functions • Migraines • Bruises • Black eyes • _____ • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression and anxiety • Shame • Worthlessness • Hopelessness • Fear of being alone • Sleep disturbances • _____ • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning faith • Questioning mankind • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____



Facilitator Note

If participants say they have never committed an assault, ask them whether they or someone they know was ever a victim of assault and what the impact of that crime was.



OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD

Alan is the victim of a brutal physical assault.

Consider stopping and starting the video to reinforce key points and then initiate a discussion at the end. Possible discussion questions and answers:

- **What was the physical impact?**
 - He is physically unable to perform tasks that he was readily able to perform before the assault.
 - He has “no knees” of which to speak.
 - His leg muscles and tendons are crushed.
 - Although he “really liked helping people,” he no longer can.
- **What was the emotional impact?**
 - He blames himself and feels guilty because he “never even defended” himself.
 - He lacks confidence in himself and his ability to take care of himself and his friends and family.
 - This happened after he was just starting to rebuild his life after many difficulties, and the assault has made it very difficult for him to continue his rebuilding efforts.
 - He suffers from depression.
 - He is afraid to walk from his house to his car.
 - He is very angry.
 - He wants “to get back to where he was” before the assault.

Being Accountable for Your Crimes

How victims react to assault varies from person to person. An assault is a violent, life-threatening crime. Even if a victim is not seriously or permanently injured, during the assault he or she had to deal with the possibility of serious injury, death, and fears of leaving loved ones behind. This can have a great emotional impact on victims, immediately and in the long term. **Victims may survive an assault, but often they are changed forever. Remind participants that no one has the right to harm another person.**



Group Discussion

Have participants read the accountability statements in their workbooks and share their thoughts with the group.



Additional Activities



Facilitator Note

If time permits after covering the material in this unit, you may conduct the additional activities listed on the next few pages before debriefing participants. You may also want to schedule a guest victim/survivor speaker.

Activity A — Assault Victim’s Impact Statement

Objective: Participants learn to understand assault from the victim’s perspective.

Refer participants to the “Assault Victim’s Impact Statement” at the end of the unit in the *Participant Workbook*. The impact statement was written by a father and stepmother whose son was seriously assaulted by several offenders. Have participants discuss or write down their thoughts, feelings, and comments. Work with participants to develop specific and detailed responses that address the areas of impact and the ripple effect.

Activity B — Victims and Secondary Victims of Assault

Objective: Participants learn to identify victims and secondary victims of assault.

Hand out the copies you made before class with the news story about an assault victim. After reading the story to the class or assigning the reading in small groups, have participants answer the following questions based on what they imagine:

- Who is the victim?
- How was the victim harmed?
- Who are the secondary victims?
- How were the secondary victims harmed?

Have participants answer the same questions again, posing one or two of the following scenarios:

- The victim is elderly.
- The victim is hearing impaired.
- The victim does not speak English.
- The victim is in a wheelchair.

Activity C — Impact of Gang-Related Assault

Objective: Participants focus on the impact of gang-related assault. Read the following scenario:

Ming, a junior high school student, had his nose broken by gang members who hit him with baseball bats and kicked him in the face because he was wearing “their” gang colors.

Divide participants into groups and have each group take on the role of one of Ming’s family members: father, mother, grandmother, brother who is out of the country serving as a Marine, sister who is a gang member, 10-year-old brother.

Have participants discuss and/or list specific ways that the family members are affected by Ming’s assault, both short term and long term.

Activity D — Impact of Drug-Related Crime

Objective: Participants better understand the impact of drug-related crime.

Individually or in small groups, have participants write about or discuss how buying, selling, or using drugs and alcohol is related to victimization. If they have ever been under the influence of or involved in buying or selling drugs, encourage them to recall their victimizing behavior. Ensure that participants stay on track by focusing on victimization, not the legalization of drugs or political/cultural needs.

Activity E — Personalizing Victimization

Objective: Make victimization more personal to participants.

Have participants pick a comment, assault trend, or scenario from this unit and discuss/write what they think or feel. Helpful prompts:

- What did you learn?
- How would you feel if someone you know was the victim in the example you chose?
- What do you think the victim experienced after the assault?

Recommended Speaker

Have an appropriate speaker address the class on the topic of assault. Listening to victim/survivor speakers may be uncomfortable for offenders. Make sure to instruct participants beforehand about appropriate behavior during the speaker's presentation. (See "Implementing the Curriculum" for information about recruiting, selecting, and screening speakers and on how to prepare both speakers and participants for the experience.)



Discussion/Wrap-Up

Discuss what participants learned in Unit 4: Assault. Address any questions they may have.

Unit 4 Participant Worksheet

