

# Responding to the Challenges of Victimization Issues in an Online Environment

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# Session Goals

- **After the session, attendees should be able to:**
  - 1. Articulate how experiencing victimization can impede student learning and academic success
  - 2. Create course materials supportive of students who are victims of crime
  - 3. Create a plan for responding appropriately to student disclosures of victimization, including how to find university and community resources for referral
  - 4. Facilitate course discussion of victimization in an appropriate manner
  - 5. Locate additional instructional materials for incorporating crime victim issues into online courses

# National Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims' Issues into University and College Curricula

**Awarded by U.S.  
Department of Justice,  
Office for Victims of Crime  
(OVC) to a team at  
University of Massachusetts  
Lowell**

## **Includes partners at:**

- UMass Boston
- UMass Dartmouth
- UMass Medical

## **Includes sub-grantees at:**

- Fisk University (Tennessee)
- Fitchburg State University (Massachusetts)
- Friends University (Kansas)
- Medical University of South Carolina
- Siena College (New York)
- University of Kentucky
- West Chester University (Pennsylvania)

# Project Goals

- **To increase the number & diversity of students exposed to information about crime victims in order to:**
  - **Develop student understanding of crime victims they may encounter in the community & in the workforce**
  - **Develop student interest in working with crime victims**
  - **Improve future provision of services to crime victims**

# Project Materials

- **Faculty Materials on Teaching About Victimization**
- **Internship Packets**
  - Include curriculum materials, and sample internship agreements and supervisor evaluation forms
- **Student Outreach Materials**
- **Curriculum Kits**
  - Typically include an instructor's guide, powerpoint presentation, assignments and student activities & materials
- **Website to house project materials**
- **National Replication Guide**

# Curriculum Kits

**1. Who is a Victim?**

**2. The Nature and Extent of Victimization**

**3. The Impact of Victimization**

**4. Being a First Responder: Providing Care and Support for Victims of Crime**

**5. Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns**

**6. The Victim and the Police: A Victim's Journey through the Criminal Justice System**

**7. Victims and the Public Prosecutor: A Victim's Journey through the Criminal Court System**

**8. Victim Awareness: Reading, Analyzing, & Writing Victim Impact Statements**

**9. Addressing the Needs of Victims in Medical Practice**

# Nature & Extent of Victimization

- **18.7 million non fatal violent and property victimizations in the U.S. in 2010<sup>1</sup> in addition to 14, 748 criminal homicides<sup>2</sup>**
  - **3.8 million non-fatal violent victimizations (1 in 67 persons 12 or older)**
  - **14.8 million property victimizations (1 in 8 households)**
- **In their lifetime<sup>3</sup>**
  - **18% of women and 1.4% of men have been raped**
  - **16% of women and 5% of men have been stalked**
  - **36% of women and 29% of men have been a victim of intimate partner violence**

# Victims of Crime

## Direct Victims

- Those who the crime happened to
- Can be anyone, regardless of
  - Gender
  - Race or ethnicity
  - Age
  - Income
  - Faith community

## Indirect Victims

- Those who are related to the direct victim in some way
  - Spouses/partners
  - Children
  - Parents
  - Family members
  - Friends
  - Co-workers
  - Neighbors

# Consequences of Victimization

## Physical

- Injury
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Psychosomatic Illnesses

## Financial

- Costs of medical/psychological care
- Lost wages
- Other costs

## Emotional

- Shock/disbelief
- Numbness
- Disturbances to appetite or sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion
- Anger
- Fear
- Anxiety

## Psychological

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Depression

# Secondary Victimization

- Occurs when victims receive a negative response from others to their victimization experience
- This can come from many sources, including family, friends, healthcare workers, law enforcement, and others
- This can exacerbate negative consequences of victimization

# Possible Signs of Issues with Victimization in Online Students

**Sudden & noticeable change in behavior &  
engagement**

**Late or missing exams, posts, & assignments**

**Decreased work quality**

**Disjointed or incoherent writing**

**Erratic behavior**

**Declining GPA**

**Disclosure of victimization**

# Teaching About Victimization: Faculty Role



**Teach subject  
matter  
sensitively so  
as to not  
cause  
additional  
harm**

**Prepare for  
and respond  
to disclosures  
of  
victimization  
experiences**

How do you include material on victims in your courses?

# Teaching Online About Victimization

- **Setting the tone**
- **Planning for & facilitating discussion**
- **Framing potentially difficult material and assignments**
- **Responding to disclosures**

# Setting the Tone

**At the start of the course or of the unit with victim-related material**

- Explain why it is important to study and talk about crime victims' issues, and why it is important to do so in a respectful and non-judgmental manner
- Model appropriate language and behavior
- Set guidelines for discussion
- Set guidelines for student self-care
- Provide referral resources

# Planning for & Facilitating Discussion

- **Goal: Structure discussion so students do not feel inhibited, but know how to express ideas and ask questions in a way that does not cause further harm to victims.**
- **Suggestions:**
  - **Set guidelines for discussion, including confidentiality**
  - **Remind students to take time to compose thoughtful posts**
  - **Provide students with specific examples of language that is respectful and not victim-blaming**
  - **Model appropriate language as faculty**

# Confidentiality

- Especially important online, where student material is written and available to the whole class
- Provide guidelines
  - Focus on what about your example is relevant to the class material
  - Exclude identifying details
  - If confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, do not share the example
  - Personal examples that get shared in the course stay in the course

# When Discussion Goes Awry

- Approach the offending student privately via email, phone, or in person
- Respond to the inappropriate material in the public forum
- If the material is too inappropriate to stay up, remove it

# Framing Potentially Difficult Material

- **Warn students whenever upcoming material may be potentially difficult**
- **Remind them of guidelines for self-care and support resources that are available**
- **Consider alternate options for potentially difficult material**

# Preparing for Disclosures - Setting Parameters

**For Example:**

**Unfortunately victimization is common, so many of you may have had personal experiences with it. This can be very difficult. While it is understandable that you may have strong reactions to the subject matter of the course, course discussions are not an appropriate place to discuss or process those feelings. I am available outside of class to provide support and referrals to appropriate resources. There are also resources listed in the syllabus and on the course website for you to consider using.**

# Preparing for Disclosures - Developing a Local Resource List

## On Campus

- Campus Police
- Chaplains/Campus Ministry
- Counseling
- Dean of Students
- Health Services
- Judicial Affairs
- Residence Life
- Victim Advocate or Services
- Women's Center

## Off Campus

- Local Police
- Domestic Violence Agency
- MADD Local Chapter
- Parents of Murdered Children/Survivors of Homicide local chapter
- Rape Crisis Center
- Suicide Hotline
- Victim Advocates
- Other Victim Services Agencies

**Best Practice: Update resources each semester**

# Preparing for Disclosures -

## Know the Rules

**Title IX**

**Clery Act**

**Mandated  
Reporting**

# Responding to a Disclosure

## Respond Sensitively & Appropriately

- Believe the student & reinforce they are not to blame
  - “This was not your fault”
- Respond positively to their decision to share
  - “I am sorry this happened to you”
- Know what not to say
  - ~~I know how you feel~~
  - ~~You should....~~
  - Avoid asking excessive questions

## Establish Safety

- Are you in danger now?
- Do you have a safe place to be?
- Are you afraid to be at home?
- Is your access to email secure?

# Responding to a Disclosure

## **Refer to Appropriate Resources**

- We all need help sometimes. I wanted to share some information with you in case you or someone you know ever needs it.
- Remind student of where to access resources and offer to email them (if safe)

## **Discuss Options for Help Related to the Course**

- If there are parts of the course that you are finding difficult, let's discuss other ways we might handle them.
- Provide alternatives if possible

# Responding to a Disclosure

## **Follow Up as Appropriate**

- Thank the student again for sharing
- Review any agreements made related to the class
- Remind them of the availability of support resources

## **If Safety is an Issue**

- Consider a generic email
  - It was good to talk with you today. If you need to discuss anything in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

# Responding to a Disclosure - In a Public Forum

## Private

- Follow up as soon as possible
  - “Whenever someone in one of my courses shares about an experience with victimization, I reach out to that person.”
- Follow the steps for responding to a disclosure in general

## Public

- Model appropriate response for others
  - “I’d like to thank John for sharing. John, I am sorry you had that experience. John’s story is related to an important point in the course...”

# For Further Information:

## Contact Us

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## Visit the Website

[www.uml.edu/vic](http://www.uml.edu/vic)

- New project materials will be added as they are reviewed and approved

# National Resources for Crime Victims

**Crime victims and those who know them or work with them can face a number of issues for which support can be helpful. Listed below are a number of national resources. Other places to look for support can be Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) at work, campus resources for college students, and state victim assistance programs.**

## **Victims of Crime**

The National Center for Victims of Crime

<https://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/Main.aspx>

National Organization for Victim Assistance

800-TRY-NOVA

<http://www.trynova.org/>

Office for Victims of Crime Directory of Crime Victims Services

<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>

## **Child Abuse**

Stop It Now! (sexual abuse)

888-PREVENT

<http://www.stopitnow.org/>

## **Drunk Driving**

MADD Victim/Survivor Helpline

877-MADD-HELP (623-3435)

<http://www.madd.org/Victim-Services.aspx>

## **Elder Abuse**

National Center on Elder Abuse

800-677-1116 (M-F, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.)

[http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/Main\\_Site/index.aspx](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/Main_Site/index.aspx)

## **Homicide**

National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children

888-818-POMC

<http://www.pomc.com/>

## **Identity Theft**

Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Hotline

877-ID-THEFT (438-4338)

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>

Identity Theft Resource Center Victim Assistance Center.

888-400-5530

[http://www.idtheftcenter.org/c\\_resources/c\\_intro.shtml](http://www.idtheftcenter.org/c_resources/c_intro.shtml)

## **Intimate Partner Violence & Family Violence**

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-SAFE (7233)

<http://www.ndvh.org/>

## **Sexual Violence**

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-HOPE (4673)

<http://online.rainn.org/> (online hotline)