

## Worksheet 3.2

### Myths and Facts About Rape and Sexual Assault

**Myth:** Rape is most often perpetrated by a stranger.

**Fact:** Victims are more likely to be raped by someone they know.

**Myth:** If there was no penetration by a penis, then there was no rape.

**Fact:** Legal definitions of sexual assault vary from state to state. For the purposes of this training, rape is the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.

**Myth:** People cannot be raped by their partners.

**Fact:** Individuals are raped by their partners. Rape is often used as a tool to control one of the partners in a relationship in which the offender batters the victim, or where one partner feels entitled to sex despite the other person's wants or needs.

However, spousal and partner rape may be treated differently than other forms of rape in a jurisdiction's laws. For example, there may be a shorter reporting period or a requirement of use of weapons or force to commit the rape.

**Myth:** Prostitutes cannot be raped.

**Fact:** Prostitutes can be and often are raped by "johns," the customers who solicit sex from them, and by "pimps," the men who often control the prostitute's money and territory by supposedly offering protection. Often these pimps control women by ensuring or introducing drug usage, and with physical threats or force.

**Myth:** Child molesters are all dirty old men.

**Fact:** Data on perpetrators of sexual offenses against children indicates that these offenders tend to be juveniles or young adults under the age of 30 (Douglas and Finkelhor 2005).

**Myth:** The "stranger" represents the greatest threat to children.

**Fact:** Among child victims of sexual abuse coming to law enforcement attention, about one-fourth are victimized by family members, and another 60 percent are abused by persons known to the child. Only 14 percent are victimized by strangers (Snyder 2000).

Often, a perpetrator will spend time “grooming” the child and his or her family by doing favors and providing assistance emotionally and physically for family members. This is done to win the family’s trust, which makes it harder for them to believe the child and decreases suspicion of the perpetrator.

**Myth:** Rape only happens to young women.

**Fact:** Elderly individuals can be and are raped. Because of such myths, elderly victims often do not come forward when they are sexually assaulted. There is a high level of shame and fear that they have lost the ability to care for themselves. In addition, the perpetrator could be someone who comes into the victim’s home to provide care. These victims may fear for their lives or that their care will be taken away.

**Myth:** Rape can’t happen in same-gender relationships.

**Fact:** Rape can occur in same-gender relationships as well as in heterosexual relationships.

**Myth:** Men cannot be raped.

**Fact:** Although men are less likely to report because of societal pressures, men can be and are raped by other men and by women.

**Myth:** If a woman drinks with a man, goes home with him, or wears skimpy clothing, it is her fault if she is raped.

**Fact:** It is never her fault. No one asks or deserves to be raped. Rape is a violent attack and a crime in which the perpetrator controls the victim.