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Notification for Victims of Assault (NoVA):

A Guide for Communities with Untested Sexual Assault Kits

AUGUST · 2019

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Acknowledgments

This guide has been made possible as a result of the contributions and support of many people across the nation who are committed to the field of sexual violence, victims, and justice.

While no interviews were conducted explicitly for the current product, researchers drew on numerous shared stories and discussions with victims, survivors, law enforcement, prosecutors, and many other. Their willingness to sit at the center of our research projects and be a part of the collective whole is commendable, courageous, and deserving of our special and enduring gratitude. We honor you through the creation and publication of this Guide and in the hope that it will assist communities with trauma-informed and victim-centered notification.

The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) wishes to thank the contributors to this guide for sharing their expertise and time for the benefit of people impacted by sexual assault. In particular, we want to recognize the commitment and guidance from professionals who contributed their time and thinking around these issues, including:

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Notification for Victims of Assault (NoVA) Change Process Snapshot

This document is a comprehensive guide about sexual assault kit (SAK) testing and the resulting need for victim notification regarding the forensic results or details on the progression of a case. This guide addresses the need for a coordinated community response to re-engage victims after testing unrequested or untested SAKs using trauma-informed, victim-centered protocols, and to build effective practices moving forward. The key to creating this lasting change is to build multidisciplinary engagement and collaboration. This resource is to be used in conjunction with state and federal statutes about confidentiality, as well as other resources, to seek the most expedient justice in sexual assault cases. We have distilled best practices and current science into a comprehensive guide and procedures called the *NoVA Change Process*. The *NoVA Change Process* is empirically based and describes the steps for victim notification to be undertaken through a coordinated community response.

NoVA Change Process—5 steps, 13 tools

Step 1: Assessing Community Context and Catalyst for Change

- Consider your community's history and demographics.
- Before you move forward, think about your community's specific needs now.
- What factors led to untested SAKs in your community?
- What is sparking this change to happen now?
- What assets already exist in your community?

Tools for Practice

- Context and Catalyst Questions to ask about your community
- Trauma-Informed Community and Organizational Resources

Step 2: Assessing Personal Readiness

- Are you ready to take part in changing protocols to improve victim notification procedures?
- Consider if you are personally ready to interact with victims in a way that does no harm.
- Consider if you are professionally ready to collaborate with multidisciplinary partners.
- Examine your own biases.

Tools for Practice

- Secondary Victimization Scale
- Gender Bias Scale
- Racial Bias Scale
- Sexual Orientation Bias Scale

Step 3: Supporting Agency and Working Group Readiness

- Identify partners in your agency who are also ready to make change.
- Do you and your partners have leadership buy-in?
- What resources (time, funding, space) do you have to facilitate changing protocols?
- Identify multidisciplinary community partners.
- Set ground rules for working together.

Tools for Practice

- Team Building Skills Worksheet
- Multidisciplinary Team Readiness Assessment Survey
- Collaboration Assessment and Inventory
- Identifying a Host Agency: Opportunities and Challenges Worksheet

Step 4: Making the Change

- Make change in your community.
- Tailor a protocol for your community.
- Ensure that there are victim-centered notification methods.

Tools for Practice

- Victim Notification Retreat Planning Guide (Detroit Example)
- Questions to Ask Yourself When Working with Juvenile Victims

Step 5: Evaluating your Protocol

- After you start notifying victims, see how well your protocol is working.
- After making the change, continue to improve your protocol as you are using it.
- Evaluate and improve your protocol after you implement it.

Tools for Practice

- Developing a Logic Model for Your Community

Figure i.1 Detailed NoVA Change Process Overview
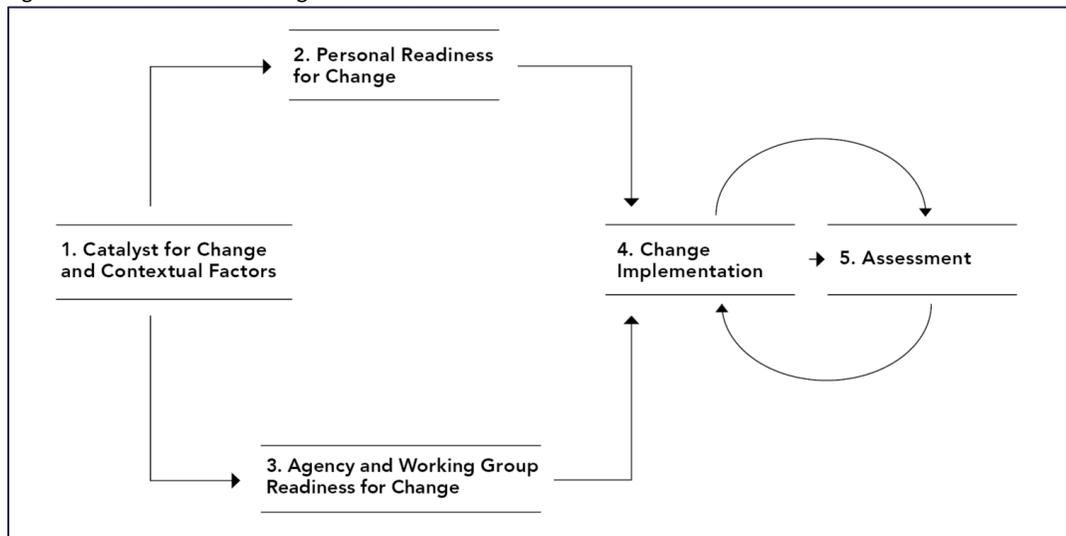
Methods

IDVSA GUIDING RESEARCH VALUES & PRINCIPLES

The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault's foundational values informed the project methods and are described below (Busch-Armendariz, Sulley, & Hill, 2016).

1. **Inclusive, collaborative, and empirically driven.** The project was designed to include the perspectives of practitioners, victims, and multidisciplinary collaborators across the field of sexual assault response. Secondary data were used to develop guidance based on the most rigorous methods of social science.

2. **Did not overburden or harm.** The process of creating this guide and the contents of this guide were developed to maximize efficiency and utility in order to avoid overburdening or harming participants.

3. **Culturally grounded.** Methods and processes were designed specifically for the project in order to yield the most beneficial findings and tools for the field.

NOVA GUIDING QUESTIONS

The main questions this project sought to answer were:

1. What are current best or promising practices for victim notification in cases with untested SAKs?

2. How can communities undertake a process for making change needed to address untested SAKs?

3. What theories and empirical evidence exists to support change processes for addressing untested sexual assault kits?

DATA COLLECTION

Existing data were collected, reviewed, and analyzed to develop the current NoVA Guide using the methods and sources described below.

1. Literature Review. The literature around sexual assault spans numerous decades and offered IDVSA researchers a robust review of both established and emerging practices. Researchers accessed sexual assault literature using the following key words "sexual assault forensic evidence," "victim notification," "victimization," "trauma," "multi-disciplinary response," "criminal justice practices," "bias," "apology," and "forensic analysis and testing," which led to the use of other related terms. Our research is contained within the United States, but international procedural justice models are referenced.

2. Consultation with national experts and practitioners. IDVSA consulted with a diverse group of professionals, including community-based advocates, system-based advocates, law enforcement, sexual assault and criminal justice researchers, prosecutors, trainers, sexual assault nurse examiners, and forensic analysts working at local, regional, state, and national levels.
   - o IDVSA conducted original research related to this topic in Houston. Concurrent to the Houston project, another similar National Institute of Justice action project occurred in Detroit, MI. The findings from IDVSA's Houston project and consultation with the Detroit researchers informed development of this guide. A key focus of these consultations was gathering data on appropriate change processes and understanding their application to victim notification. This specific line of inquiry and the resulting learning helped develop the underpinning theory on which NoVA is based, the NoVA Change Process.

3. Development of training and training tools. In collaboration with other practitioners and researchers, IDVSA developed and delivered a series of trainings and training tools utilizing a flipped-classroom model. These included webinars, conferences, and workshops. Pre-and-post evaluations were completed which allowed us to gather additional information about the needs and challenges professionals face as they work in this field.

4. Technical assistance to professionals on victim notification. IDVSA created a web-based portal for practitioners to ask questions related to victim notification. Each question was addressed individually and the data captured for future training. As the technical assistance partner, IDVSA integrated these questions into educational webinars that were accessible on the portal. In addition, IDVSA developed training tools specifically designed for stakeholders to assist with their multidisciplinary coordination and victim notification efforts.

5. Synthesize. IDVSA researchers integrated the knowledge from the literature review, applicable change theory developed from consultations, and practice examples provided through the technical assistance component of this action project to develop the NoVA Guide.

LIMITATIONS

The research is limited in scope. Victim notification is but one essential component in the complex and interrelated processes to bring justice and resolution to victims of sexual assault. It was beyond the scope of this project to study other components of the process.

EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The learning framework utilized throughout the development of the NoVA Guide was The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (also called Bloom's Taxonomy), a framework for learning.[1] Six learning levels describe the process for critical thinking and acquiring new skills.

By applying and integrating this learning framework, the NoVA Guide serves as a tool that addresses cognitive learning and integration of learning into practice.

The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

1. Knowledge (new information; data and literature)
2. Comprehension (understanding; ways to check in)
3. Application (use in practice; examples from field)
4. Analysis (making meaning from what was learned; "try to combine use for self/practice")
5. Synthesis (action – creating, innovating)
6. Evaluation (assessing how did it go?)

Introduction

BACKGROUND

For several years, there has been an ongoing national conversation about rape and sexual assault leading to expanded protections and crime definitions,[2] enhanced funding and resources at the local level,[3]* and a reexamination of policies at federal, state, and local levels.[4] At the center of this conversation has been the discovery of untested sexual assault kits (SAKs), which emerged as a major criminal and social justice issue.

A Note on Language: Use of Terms

> *Untested, unrequested, unsubmitted, backlogged, to name a few.* A variety of terms are used across the sexual assault field to characterize the status of the testing of forensic evidence in SAKs. For the purpose of this guide, the term "untested" is used most often as it refers broadly to forensic evidence that has not been analyzed.[5][6] "Unrequested" or "unsubmitted" refer to SAKs that have not been requested for testing by law enforcement or other criminal justice professionals (e.g., prosecutors) and are commonly stored in police department property rooms.[7] "Backlogged" SAKs have been submitted to a crime lab for testing but have been in queue for testing for 30 or more days.[8][9][10] We use the same approach as the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in their *Down the Road* report.[11] NIJ points out that media reports may use the term "backlog" or "the backlog" in an incorrect manner. This guide uses "backlogged" specifically as well as the other definitions above to avoid confusion.

The movement to address untested SAKs fundamentally has fairness at its heart and was spurred by grassroots advocacy, national media attention, and state policies and legislation.

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*The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 and its subsequent reauthorizations in 2000, 2005, and 2013 authorized funding related to domestic violence for enforcement efforts, research and data collection, prevention programs, and services for victims. The VAWA immigration-related provisions are found in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) which is Title 8 of the United States Code.

In 2007, a survey of law enforcement agencies found that almost 20% of unsolved sexual assault cases spanning a 5-year period had forensic evidence that had yet to be submitted to crime labs.[12][13] Although reasons for not testing sexual assault evidence vary across the country, many communities began auditing, triaging, and testing older and unsubmitted SAKs at that time. The large-scale testing of these SAKs in the United States has led to the re-opening of investigations and subsequent prosecution of cases which necessitates the re-engagement of sexual assault victims.

Major efforts have been established to support the testing, investigation, and prosecution of older SAKs with dedicated resources from federal and state agencies (e.g., District Attorney of New York or DANY, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI), NIJ DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction Program). Although communities are eager to clear their cache of untested SAKs, much of this is being done without formal protocols in place for working with victims and ensuring victim-centered practices.

Victim participation is often critical to sexual assault investigations and prosecutions. However, extensive research demonstrates the negative effects of participation in systems that do not understand what victims need and how the trauma impacts them.[14][15][16] To minimize potential trauma, notification protocols should reinforce choice and control for the victims, demonstrate a commitment to survivor well-being, and seek to hold perpetrators accountable.

GOALS AND AUDIENCES

This guide has two main goals. The primary goal is to support communities and practitioners in building collaborative multidisciplinary teams tasked with establishing locally-driven notification protocols aimed at achieving justice without re-traumatizing survivors. In addition, and of equal importance, we hope to increase understanding, knowledge, and skills around victim-centered, trauma-informed, and evidence-informed notification practices.

All sexual assault cases require a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach.[17][18][19] Therefore, the NoVA guide is helpful for all professionals and organizations that participate in victim notification, including criminal justice and community-based organizations. We recognize that criminal justice professionals and their partners have notified and supported victims in many ways for many years; our guide draws upon this wealth of experience to provide a framework for confronting unique challenges and opportunities that have emerged in a manner tailored to local realities and needs.

Although the guide's focus is on untested and unrequested SAKs, practitioners can also apply the fundamental principles and many of the practices described in this guide to current cases

and broader system-level responses, regardless of the age of the case, or whether a SAK was collected. There are multiple benefits to applying lessons learned about older cases to new sexual assault cases.

After reviewing this guide, you will:

1. Understand critical components for victim-centered, trauma-informed victim notification and be able to apply them in your community.
2. Be familiar with evidence from research and practice that can inform the notification protocol development process.

HOW TO USE THE NOVA GUIDE:

1. Read about the NoVA steps.
2. Identify your community partners to form a multidisciplinary working group.
3. Discuss NoVA and complete Tools for Practice exercises with your working group.
4. Initiate a change process and develop a notification protocol unique to your community.

Each step has four sections:

1. What You Will Learn is an overview of the step content.
2. NoVA Step explains the purpose of each step.
3. What You Need to Know offers relevant evidence and practical information related to the step.
4. Tools for Practice includes exercises – such as case studies, self-assessments, and worksheets – to practice skills related to the step.

Community examples

Throughout this guide, we will refer to lessons learned in the case studies of Memphis, Tennessee; Detroit, Michigan; and Houston, Texas. Memphis has taken action to address their untested SAKs and share information about their progress. Detroit and Houston were sites for a project funded by NIJ that began in 2011. They were two of the early jurisdictions working to understand and address why kits were left untested.

Figure i.1 Detailed NoVA Change Process Overview
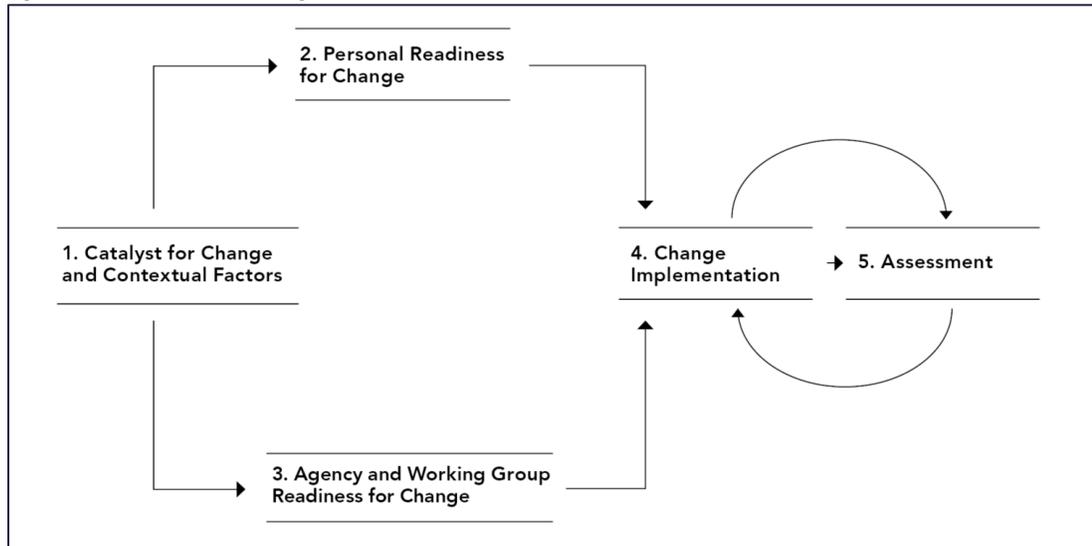
NOVA GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The *NoVA Change Process,* outlined in Figure i.1, is referenced throughout this document and guided by four overarching principles:

1. Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Approach
2. Procedural Justice
3. Evidence-Informed Practice
4. Criminal Justice

Throughout the guide, What You Need to Know and Tools for Practice concepts are rooted in these principles to support you in translating theory and research into everyday practice. We encourage you to apply these concepts to every step of the victim notification process and implementation of your own protocols.

Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approach

NoVA must be victim-centered and trauma-informed, which means that all protocols, procedures, and actions taken by individuals are based on victim needs and grounded in trauma research. Victim-centered and trauma-informed practices are distinct concepts that each address the needs, rights, and preferences of victims ethically and sensitively. In each of these practices, victims are included as active decision-makers, have choices, receive accurate information, are validated and respected, and professionals consider past and potential trauma in individual and collective experiences. It is critical for the criminal justice process to embrace and incorporate victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches in all aspects of this work.[20] Engagement with sexual assault victims is critical to the successful investigation and prosecution of sex crimes; victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches are key to successful victim engagement.[21] [22]

Procedural Justice

NoVA must be rooted in the concept that procedural justice, or fairness in victim notification and in all aspects of the criminal justice process, is optimal. Procedural justice deals with how people are treated during conflict resolution procedures and practices, and the effect of that treatment on their perceptions of justice and fairness.[23] [24] [25] [26] The procedural justice framework is used in various settings and contexts, including the civil and criminal justice systems, prisons, and the workplace. In short, procedural justice is concerned with, not just outcomes, but also with how the processes and people involved legitimize rules and authority fairly and consistently.[27] [28] Primary procedural justice concepts include voice, accuracy, neutrality, respect and dignity, and fair treatment (see Table 3.1 Procedural Justice in Practice).[29] Professionals who apply these concepts can counteract the negative effects of trauma and stigma. This type of professional treatment validates victims in the aftermath of a sexual assault.[30] This approach may also reduce the risk of secondary victimization and enhance a victim's willingness to participate in the criminal justice system.

Evidence-Informed Practice

NoVA is based on the most relevant and recent science in the field. Best practices for victim notification in cases with previously untested SAKs are still being established. NoVA incorporates evidence from research in communities that are undertaking SAK testing and notification as well as evidence from the broader scientific understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and working with victims.

Criminal Justice

NoVA relies on an awareness of the local criminal justice system. Criminal justice refers to the various agencies and processes that address and control crime and hold accountable those that violate laws. Key actors in the criminal justice system include law enforcement, prosecution, defense, courts or the judiciary, and corrections.[31] Many cases involving unsubmitted SAKs are re-opened and pursued by the criminal justice system. Therefore, responsive victim notification relies on a complete working knowledge of that system and an awareness of how principles, laws, and procedures may vary by jurisdiction.

Notification practices should include relevant information on criminal justice resources, jurisdictional approaches and case flow, and victims' rights. All states and the federal government have an established set of victims' rights that offer protections to victims of crime and allow them a role in criminal justice proceedings beyond that of a witness.[32] Such information provides victims with concrete information on what to expect should a criminal case move forward, their rights, and available resources.

1. Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approach
   - *Victim-Centered:* The well-being and choices of the victim are at the center of any decisions about recovery and engagement with the criminal justice system. The victim's needs are the primary concern of all parties involved.[33]
   - *Trauma-Informed:* The service providers, stakeholders, and organizations engaging with victims work from a knowledge base and deep understanding of the lingering impact of trauma. Steps are taken and resources allocated to prioritize the victim's emotional safety, physical safety, comfort, and recovery.[34]
2. Procedural Justice
   - *Procedural Justice* is the idea that each step undertaken in the process of resolving conflict and bringing justice to victims is fair.[35]
3. Evidence-Informed Practice
   - NoVA practices reflect the most relevant and recent *evidence-informed practices* in the field to support service providers, stakeholders, organizations, and victims.
4. Criminal Justice
   - A complete working knowledge of the *criminal justice* system – laws, procedures, and key players – and how it operates locally is essential for effective victim notification.[36]

Approaching Change

This guide approaches victim notification through a framework of change, which is the process of a community coming together collaboratively to test SAKs and develop and implement a victim-centered notification protocol. Before change occurs, jurisdictions may or may not be operating in a collaborative framework, and may or may not have victim-centered notification practices in place. In some cases, jurisdictions may not currently be undertaking efforts to address their inventory of untested (or unprocessed) SAKs or conducting notification at all. After implementing a framework of change, jurisdictions are able to work in a multidisciplinary team to notify victims ethically and respectfully, using a notification protocol developed specifically for and by their own community.

Calling for change in any field may imply that a system was performing poorly and spark feelings of defensiveness. However, this guide is focused on the ways in which taking steps in a change process move us toward greater learning. Ultimately, a change process can move us all to better practices, improved services in communities, and strengthened relationships among partners.

THE BASIS FOR THE NOVA CHANGE PROCESS

The *NoVA Change Process* explains the development and implementation of victim notification protocols for communities with untested SAKs. This process is adapted from two existing models: Weiner's theory of organizational readiness for change and Berger, Otto-Salaj, Stoffel, Hernandez-Meier, & Gromoske's program change model.[37] [38] The theory of organizational readiness for change explains multi-level, multi-faceted change in which members of an organization demonstrate commitment and belief in their capacity to be effective. The program change model framework complements Weiner's theory by examining personal, institutional, and organizational factors when translating research into practice. The *NoVA Change Process* applies these concepts to victim notification, and to the changes that occur on the personal, agency, and community levels to respond effectively. There are five components to the model and each describes key factors in the change process (see Figure i.2 and Table i.1).

Figure i.2. NoVA Change Process Components
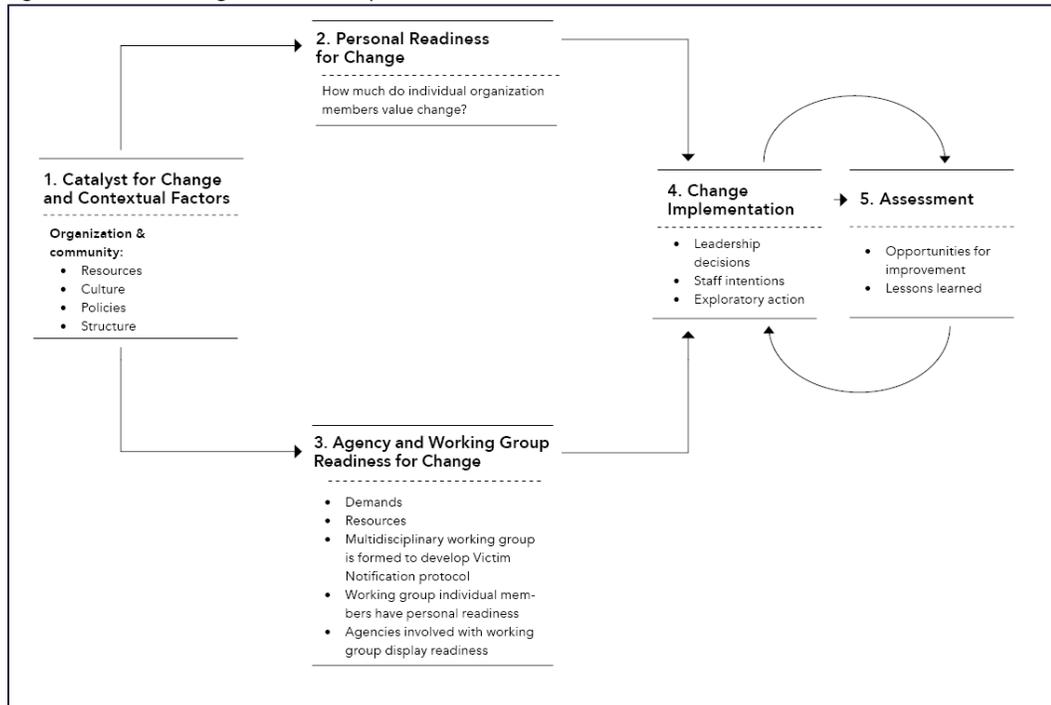
A LOOK AHEAD AT THE COMPLETE NOVA CHANGE PROCESS

Table i.1 details the five primary components of the *NoVA Change Process,* defines each component, and provides examples of each in victim notification. Each component or step of the process builds on the step prior to it. By understanding the process as a whole you will see the comprehensive nature of the approach and know where you are headed when working through this guide.

Table i.1. Detailed NoVA Change Process[39][40]

Primary Component	Definition of Component	Example of Component in Victim Notification
1. Context and Catalyst for Change	Consideration of factors, historical and organizational, influencing the agency or group's ability to complete change	History of the issue within the organization and community • History of the state's penal code definition of sexual assault and related laws • Implications of the statute of limitations, prosecution rates, and news coverage about untested SAKs • Perceptions of sexual assault cases in general, the public perception and public trust in criminal justice police response • The reason why SAK testing and notification is taking place, such as discovery of an inventory of untested SAKs
2. Your Personal Readiness for Change	The degree to which each key stakeholder desires and supports change	The individual practitioners, criminal justice system employees, advocates, and responders • What personal beliefs and biases do professionals hold? • How do Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), law enforcement, and the crime lab communicate with each other?
3a. Agency Readiness for Change	Agency's ability to undertake change, including their knowledge of resources and capacity to address the required change	Each agency involved assesses itself • Leaders at individual agencies must be open to multidisciplinary work in order to engage victims and value their needs and rights • Review of the process of change and organizational dynamics • Practical resources are allocated, such as staffing and time • Agencies or groups must seek multidisciplinary composition, effective communication, and identify problem solving processes

Primary Component	Definition of Component	Example of Component in Victim Notification
3b. Working Group Readiness for Change	Personal and institutional readiness for change are aligned across working groups and partnerships	Review of the process of change and organizational dynamics as well as group membership • The process of developing, maintaining, and sustaining the collaborative relationships is critical • This involves not only multidisciplinary composition, but also communication and problem solving processes
4. Change Implementation: Creating Your Protocol	Action taken to address the issue, including adoption of the change through leadership decisions and change implementation	Media relations • Working with, and responding to, the media to drive project messaging and information distribution
5. Assessment: Evaluating Your Protocol	Ongoing evaluation and assessment of actions taken, opportunities for improvement, and lessons learned	Self-assessment and organizational assessment practices • Examining and understanding beliefs and practices, and doing so vulnerably and without blame (see NIJ Sentinel Events box example)

Section 1. Getting Started: Context and Catalyst for Victim Notification

STEP 1. ASSESSING THE CONTEXT AND CATALYST FOR CHANGE

What You Will Learn

- Information about state and national policy and legislation related to SAKs
- Concepts of victim-centered and trauma-informed practice
- Concept of a catalyst for change, and how to identify your organization or community's specific catalyst or catalysts
- Skills to assess your community context

This step describes how to leverage your community context and current catalyst(s) to better understand and address untested SAKs. Community assessment increases understanding of the climate for testing SAKs and implementing trauma-informed, victim-centered practices. The state and national context for victim notification, including the background of the national issue and relevant state and national legislation, are vital parts of every community's context.

NoVA Step 1: Assessing Context and Catalyst for Change

Before developing a notification protocol, you should assess your community context. Although there are emerging best practices for victim notification, the notification protocols and practices in your community will be unique and responsive to local needs, resources, histories, alliances, and tensions.

Your notification protocol should take into account:

- Macro factors, including national and state laws
- Scientific evidence and emerging best practices
- Community factors, including
- Resources and funding
- Community demographics
- Community culture, historical tensions, and inequities
- Established relationships with other groups or organizations
- History of your agency or organization

One important piece of context is the catalyst for change – what is sparking the change to happen now? Changes, including initiating SAK testing or developing a multidisciplinary working group, do not occur on their own. There must be an event, incident, person, or shift in thought that facilitates them and overcomes the status quo. Catalysts can be internal (e.g., decisions by leadership) or external (e.g., legal changes or media pressure); both scenarios present challenges and opportunities. More than one catalyst can exist in a community, or multiple catalysts can spur multiple iterations of change. Understanding the catalyst in your community helps you to prepare and plan your notification process. For example, an external catalyst like a lawsuit may increase negative pressure or media scrutiny. In this case, your community may need to focus more attention on protecting privacy and managing media strategy. External factors may also bring opportunities for increased resources or attention from leadership.

NIJ Sentinel Events[41]

NIJ's "Sentinel Event" model recognizes that negative events that occur within complex systems are not just the result of one person's actions, but often point to larger problems. When one of these sentinel events occurs, like an inventory of untested SAKs, it prompts a review of the entire system to find the underlying causes of the issue. For more information on sentinel events, see NIJ's Sentinel Events Initiative.

Available at: https://www.nij.gov/topics/justice-system/Pages/sentinel-events.aspx#whatis

Special Note on Skipping Ahead in the NoVA Change Process: What About a Needs Assessment? The NoVA Process begins with understanding the catalyst for change and contextual factors; however, a community may need to launch other activities simultaneously and may be asking, "Don't we need to do a needs assessment first?" Good question.

A needs assessment is an evaluative approach to understanding the resources, relationships, and existing gaps related to a practice. It is a method for gathering information from multiple stakeholders to have a holistic sense of availability and need from diverse perspective. It also helps guide the provision of scare resources.

In this case, a community may not need to do a needs assessment prior to identifying the need for a victim notification protocol, because an established need already exists. However, a community should consider undertaking a needs assessment early on in the process to determine what the victim protocol notification needs are for multiple players in the system, including what already exists. For guidance on conducting a needs assessment, see Step 5. Assessment and Evaluation.

Figure 1.1. NoVA Change Process Step 1: Context and Catalyst
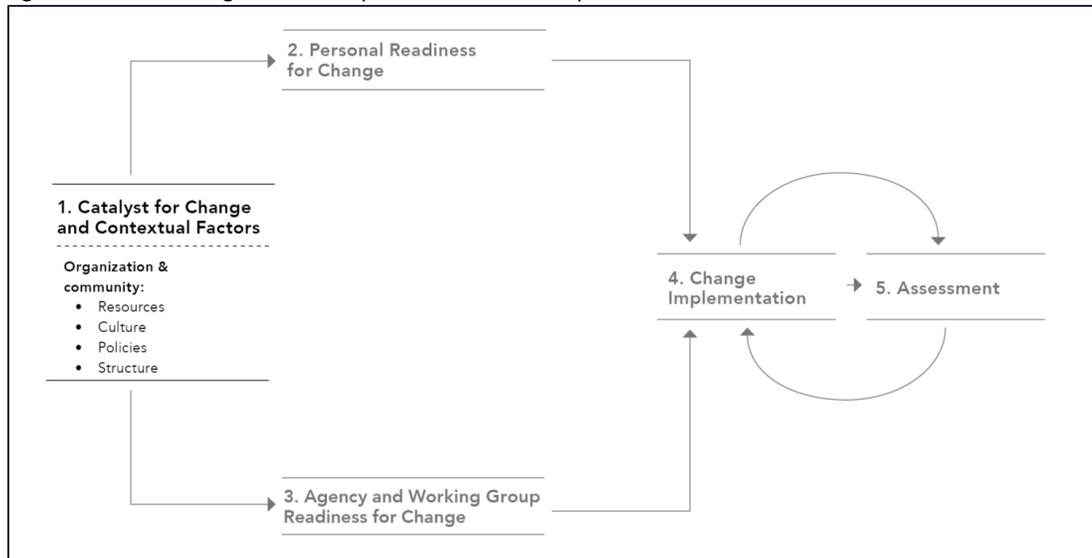
Context for Change in Memphis[42] [43]

When a multidisciplinary working group in Memphis, Tennessee began addressing untested SAKs and developing a victim notification protocol, there were a number of contextual factors present. These can serve as examples and considerations for other groups in the early stages of planning.

Resources and Funding

Although members of the Memphis Police Department (MPD) and the Shelby County Rape Crisis Center (SCRCC) had wanted to test their inventory of SAKs for some time, there had

not been adequate funding or staff resources. When a national and local spotlight was placed on Memphis, the Memphis City Council provided funding to take on testing of untested SAKs. MPD and SCRCC received support for the initiative from the mayors of both Memphis and Shelby County.

Culture and Tension in Memphis

According to staff from MPD and SCRCC, many members of Memphis' large African American community did not trust the police department. Understanding this community context influenced Memphis' victim notification protocol. Police in plain clothes and advocates decided to make initial notifications together in person in an attempt to strengthen engagement with victims and mitigate any suspicion.

A History of Agency Collaboration

In 1975, SCRCC was one of the first rape crisis centers to start collecting SAKs. SCRCC and MPD's relationship spanned almost 41 years before launching a collaborative response to untested SAKs. Uniquely, SCRCC includes a mix of system and community-based advocates. Memphis also collaborated with the Joyful Heart Foundation, a national organization that provided guidance and support for the working group's efforts.

Catalysts in Memphis

Three catalysts caused the City of Memphis to reveal its untested SAK situation publicly:

- National and statewide interest
- A lawsuit
- Media pressure

Although these external catalysts involved challenges such as negative publicity, they also created opportunities such as increased attention and resources directed to the issue from the city council and mayor's office. This allowed agencies to take on the issue with increased funding and staffing.

What You Need to Know

Although community factors vary, all jurisdictions work within the same national context. Understanding the national issue of untested SAKs, relevant SAK legislation, and the necessity of victim-centered culture change throughout the criminal justice process will help you begin the notification protocol development process.

Untested SAKs: The National Context.

Untested SAKs have become a prominent topic across the United States. In some places, professionals did not know untested SAKs were accumulating. For example, in Detroit, a stockpile of over 10,000 SAKs was discovered in a remote police storage facility.[44] Similarly, thousands of SAKs were found in police storage units in Los Angeles and Dallas.[45] These kits are not recent cases - in fact, many are decades old and raised several concerns pertaining to statute of limitations, evidence preservation, and the ability to adequately investigate the cases (e.g. ability to locate victims and suspects).[46] Yet, despite these obstacles, jurisdictions across the nation are rising to the challenge by actively taking these cases from testing through prosecution.

As jurisdictions move forward in identifying untested SAKs, they also need to secure resources – financial and personnel – to perform forensic analyses of the SAKs. Despite the advancement of forensic science technology, capacity is still limited. Jurisdictions often need to outsource the testing of such large quantities of SAKs as local laboratories may not be able to keep up with the demand. In addition to testing, there are review processes that must be performed in order to determine if a DNA profile can be created and submitted to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database.[47] For more information about the CODIS, see Appendix A: Essential Facts and Foundational Information – DNA Evidence.

Recommended Reading

Two reports released by the Department of Justice (DOJ) are highly recommended for additional reading. The reports address the national context of unanalyzed evidence in sexual assault cases and various related challenges (e.g., statute of limitations and stranger vs. non-stranger cases).

The Road Ahead: Unanalyzed Evidence in Sexual Assault Cases, May 2011
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/233279.pdf

Down the Road: Testing Evidence in Sexual Assaults, June 2016
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249805.pdf

What Factors Led to Untested SAKs?

Although large quantities of untested SAKs are typically found in police storage, the factors leading to this are systemic and multifaceted. Understanding the factors that created the inventories of untested SAKs is important to ensure the same issues are not encountered in the future. The factors outlined below also point to the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration that will inform policy and practice to prevent a reoccurrence of this issue.

Funding and Capacity Limitations

As in Memphis, lack of financial resources have often limited the ability to send all SAKs to the crime lab for analysis. SAKs can cost up to $1,500 each to test depending on the amount of evidence for testing.[48] Limited crime lab capacity also contributed to the inventories of untested SAKs. Sometimes a majority of SAKs were submitted, but sat in lab queues for 30 or more days generating an inventory that continued to grow over time. Testing times vary and depend on a variety of factors relating to personnel capacity and prioritization of evidence testing for sexual assault and other crimes. Testing a SAK is a multi-step and involved process; on average, it takes between three to six months to complete the testing process.

In addition to the financial resources needed to test SAKs, resources are also needed to investigate and prosecute cases. With older cases this can be especially challenging as investigators need to locate victims, witnesses, and offenders as well as older case files if still available. In Detroit, locating victims was a time-intensive process of database searches, multiple visits to known addresses, and engagement with each victim about the case.[49]

Community Example: Factors in Detroit

In Detroit, SAKs went untested due to systemic, organizational, and individual factors, including:

- Chronic understaffing (e.g., police, crime lab, prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners)
- Resource depletion relative to other cities
- Budget and staffing cuts
- Sexual assault cases being closed after minimal investigative effort
- Law enforcement expressing negative, victim-blaming beliefs that affected SAK submission decisions[50]

Case Circumstances

Most commonly, SAKs are collected and then stored in police department property or evidence rooms. Historically, a prosecutor or detective used discretion to prioritize a case and order forensic analysis. Probative value determined this decision and prosecutorial decision-making influenced the course of a case in the criminal justice system. Therefore, not all SAKs were tested. In some cases, non-DNA evidence resulted in the arrest and indictment of an offender, so the SAK was never submitted for testing. Other times, a case did not

progress because of a victim's reluctance or inability to participate. At other times, prosecutors may have deemed there was not enough evidence or testimony to prove the defendant's guilt and decided not to submit a SAK for testing.

Misconceptions, Lack of Information, and Bias

Historic misconceptions about the impacts of trauma contributed to bias against victims and also affected SAK testing decisions. Professionals were less likely to request SAK testing when they viewed victims as disengaged, inconsistent, lacking credibility, or acting strangely.

Insufficient knowledge about the role and impact of forensic evidence in sexual assault cases also contributed to untested SAKs. In some cases, officers did not request or encourage a forensic exam to be conducted because they were unaware that victims could still have the exam after post-assault bathing. Also, not all officers were aware that there are high rates of serial (repeat) and multiple offending (offenders who commit multiple types of interpersonal violence).[51] That is to say that, even if police knew who the offender was in a particular case, SAK testing could link the offender to other cases of assault by entering the DNA profile into CODIS.

Poor Information Management Systems

As the inventory of untested SAKs grew over the past few decades, it was further exacerbated by the lack of information management infrastructure. Older case information was stored using antiquated paper and pencil methods, or case evidence was not properly labeled, recorded, or linked back to the case. As departments developed web-based platforms for storing case information, older cases were not necessarily integrated into the systems and evidence information was not consistently labeled with case numbers or information. Both Detroit and Houston struggled with matching older, untested SAKs to appropriate case information. In addition, law enforcement and prosecutors often use different case management systems, making it difficult to track case information as it evolves.[52]

Legal and Policy Implications at State and Local Levels

Jurisdictions may not test SAKs because the statute of limitations for prosecuting the assault has run out or nearly run out. Some jurisdictions may even destroy SAKs due to evidence retention rules.[53] As of 2013, only eight states had no limitation on prosecuting felony sexual assault; however, 27 states did have some form of a DNA exception that extends the time limit for prosecuting a sexual assault.[54]

SAK Testing Policy and Legislation

As states have adapted polices to extend statute of limitations through a DNA exception, others have begun implementing legislative mandates to test all kits. Laws regarding SAKs and notification vary by state. Some states, like Illinois, Ohio, and Texas, require mandatory

submission of SAKs to labs for testing.[55] Many states have proposed new bills or are already working to clear untested SAK inventories even without legislative mandates.

Such policy shifts or decisions can be challenging as they often put additional burden on jurisdictions without providing proper funding to adequately implement the changes. For example, in Detroit, the multidisciplinary team discussed the benefits and challenges to implementing an approach of testing all SAKs and how it would impact resources. When Detroit officials discovered the large quantity of kits in storage, they did not have the funding to test them all. On the other hand, Los Angeles and New York City moved forward with testing all kits that, in turn, overwhelmed law enforcement and prosecutors.[56]

The 2004 Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program provides federal funding for labs to test backlogged SAKs and requires states to create plans for reducing SAK inventories.[57] The 2013 SAFER Act requires 75% of DNA analysis grant funding to be used for analyzing untested SAKs or increasing lab capacity.[58] It also allows funds to be used for one-time audits of SAKs in law enforcement custody and to establish auditing and reporting processes. Other provisions include: providing training assistance to states about untested SAK inventories; protocols for SAK processing to be established within 18 months of the law becoming effective; and preventing the publication of victims' personal information. Other policies and statutes ensure that counselors and advocates involved in the victim notification process protect the confidentiality of victims.[59] For information about the status of the situation and relevant state legislation, visit the Joyful Heart Foundation's End the Backlog Initiative.

Available at: http://www.endthebacklog.org/

Resources and Funding for Untested SAKs

Some funding is available to address backlogged SAKs, such as the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program described above. Recently, new funding sources have been developed and leveraged to address this issue. The BJA SAKI grants or DANY grants provide funds to many jurisdictions. Other communities are responding to new laws that address many aspects of SAK testing, including laws that mandate audits of untested SAKs by implementing mandatory testing of backlogged and all future SAKs within established timeframes. Some of these efforts include funding; some jurisdictions have undertaken this work using existing resources. In Texas, individuals renewing their driver's licenses now have the option of donating to help clear the state's inventory of untested SAKs.[60]

Understanding and Counteracting Trauma and Types of Victimization

To provide appropriate responses to victims and avoid re-traumatizing practices, it is critical that criminal justice and service provider personnel understand the trauma that victims of sexual assault experience. Victims are affected by both the initial trauma of the assault as well as during victim notification and in their other interactions with professionals. During

notification, they may experience reactivation of their trauma symptoms, including memories and flashbacks.[61]

Due to the neurobiological processes involved, victims can have varied reactions to trauma, including:

- Difficulty concentrating [62] [63]
- Impaired rational thought and compromised decision-making
- Hyper affect
- Flat affect or lack of emotion
- Laughing and joking
- Being irritable, argumentative, and experiencing emotional swings
- Physical pain such as headaches, body pain, and stomach distress
- Tonic immobility (TI) or "shutdown" in the body [64]
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, and other self-medicating behaviors[65]
- Interference with memory processing, resulting in memories that may be both very accurate and vivid, but fragmented and difficult to organize chronologically [66] [67]
- Anxiety and fear
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Social adjustment issues
- Sexual dysfunction
- Suicidality [68] [69]

For a full review of the neurobiological effects of trauma on victims, see Appendix A.

After the initial victimization, victims can also experience secondary victimization in their interactions with various systems and service providers, such as law enforcement and criminal justice, health care, mental health care, and social services.[70]

Who are Victim Advocates?

"Victim advocates are professionals trained to support victims of crime. Advocates offer victims information, emotional support, and help finding resources and filling out paperwork. Sometimes, advocates go to court with victims. Advocates may also contact organizations, such as criminal justice or social service agencies, to get help or information for victims. Some advocates staff crisis hotlines, run support groups, or provide in-person counseling or case management. Victim advocates may also be called victim service providers, victim/witness coordinators, or victim/witness specialists."[71] In addition, community-based advocates are often assigned to provide sexual assault forensic examination accompaniments.

Service delivery that permits, enables, allows for, and does not actively address the biases that lead to victim blaming can unintentionally cause secondary victimization. Secondary victimization can also result from service delivery that places the needs and priorities of the institutions charged with serving victims ahead of the needs and priorities of the victims themselves.[72] Victims report experiencing victim-blaming behaviors across multiple disciplines, including having the veracity of their claims questioned by police, prosecutors, and medical personnel. After reporting an assault, victims' cases may not move forward due to characteristics of both the assault (e.g., relationship to perpetrator, use of force) and law enforcement or prosecutor perceptions of the victim (e.g., intoxication, prior "risk-taking" behavior, and "reputation").[73]

The criminal justice system by nature is complex and has a variety of functions. Victims may be wary, confused, or misinformed about engaging with it. It requires time, energy, and emotional and financial resources to participate in the criminal justice system. If a victim has barriers or hesitations about participating, this may be misinterpreted by police and prosecutors as lack of cooperation or false reporting.[74]

Service providers who do not understand trauma or trauma-informed care can inadvertently contribute to secondary victimization. Trauma symptoms, like memory fragmentation and disassociation, often make it difficult or impossible for victims of assault to give complete and linear descriptions of the incident to law enforcement.[75] Additionally, many victims appear numb, avoidant, or angry; law enforcement personnel may be expecting to see fear or sadness.[76] A law enforcement officer who is not familiar with trauma responses may take these symptoms as evidence that a victim is being evasive, is lying, or is untrustworthy.[77]

Law enforcement personnel strive to operate from a neutral and unbiased position, but are often trained to detect lies by assessing body language, cooperation, avoidant behaviors, and physiological reactions like increased heart rate. Trauma-informed training tells us that the indicators often associated with lying are also symptoms of trauma. If officers are misinformed on this fact, they may draw premature conclusions about victims' credibility.[78] Unfortunately, when victims feel that they are being shamed or not believed – or are unable to communicate effectively with law enforcement – they are less likely to continue cooperating with the reporting, investigative, and prosecution processes.[79] [80] Victim-blaming reactions from other formal (e.g., investigators, prosecutors, health care workers) and informal support providers (e.g., friends, family) can have the same effect.[81]

Community Example: Secondary Victimization in Detroit

The Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Report[82] describes several incidents of law enforcement personnel disbelieving victims. This was particularly true for adolescent victims whose SAKs made up a large portion of those that went untested (of the 1,595 kits tested in the project, 43% of the victims were under age 18). One reason that law enforcement did not believe adolescents appears to have been stereotypes about this age group, including assumptions that they make up claims of sexual assault to cover up for "bad" behavior like staying out late, being somewhere or with someone they weren't supposed to be, or experimenting with alcohol and drugs.[83] One law enforcement officer described doubts about young victims this way: "Sometimes with the school girls… an experienced investigator knows more than an inexperienced one. You kind of look and go, yeah it didn't happen like [she] said it happened."[84]

Youth victims (age 16-24) experienced secondary victimization when law enforcement personnel doubted the credibility of their reports, which may have had consequences for victim notification years later. Survivors in Detroit who were age 16-24 at the time of the assault were more likely to have strong negative reactions to notification and were somewhat less likely to want to have continued contact with the criminal justice system. This finding may be related to their initial negative experiences with the system.[85] See Step 4 and Appendix A for more information on working with juvenile victims.

Tertiary Victimization

Tertiary victimization is also an important consideration and occurs when society as a whole is victimized by the absence or presence of something.[86] For example, tertiary victimization could encompass the issue of returning to unsubmitted forensic evidence, testing it, and re-introducing this information to victims years after the initial reports. Victims may have had the expectation that if they submitted to the difficult and invasive forensic exam – even with compassionate, high quality SANE care – then the evidence would have been processed or examined in a timely manner.

When discussing the full scope of victimization, we must also acknowledge those crimes that could have been prevented and the costs to both victims and society when a future sexual assault was not averted. Delayed processing may have resulted in delayed arrest and prosecution and the possibility of a subsequent victimization by a serial perpetrator that could have been prevented. See the "Serial Perpetration and Future Victimizations" shadowbox below for more information.

The psychological impact and long-term effects of sexual assault on the quality of life for victims are as varied as the individuals impacted by these crimes. Jurisdictions who address

untested SAKs must mitigate the risk for secondary and tertiary victimization wherever possible.

Trauma-Informed Care

> The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC) describes the Trauma Informed Care (TIC) philosophy as asking, "What has happened to you?" instead of "What is wrong with you?"[87] In this way, TIC locates the "problem" in the traumatic event and its consequences, rather than in the individual. TIC is service delivery intentionally built upon an understanding of the impact of violence and victimization, in which every interaction is meaningful for the recovery process and reduces the risk of re-traumatization.[88] The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)[89] provides six TIC principles that include:
>
> - Safety
> - Trustworthiness and transparency
> - Peer support
> - Collaboration and mutuality
> - Empowerment, voice, and choice
> - Cultural, historical, and gender issues

Trauma-Informed Responses, Services, and Interviewing

Victims of trauma do not generally exhibit the behaviors that professionals expect to see and are more common in victims of other types of crime. Victims and communities need first responders and service providers to develop the ability to provide trauma-informed care. Government and organizational entities that design sexual assault response systems to accommodate the varied consequences of trauma exposure ultimately help to reduce the risk of re-traumatizing those who come to them for help.[90] The scientific understanding of trauma continues to evolve, and responders must stay up-to-date in order to have the tools to recognize the impact and effects of trauma on victims.

Guidelines and best practices for working with traumatized individuals are available to help build this capacity in the institutions and communities that serve victims and to help survivors heal. Trauma-informed organizations seek to engage victims by validating their trauma and providing them with the chance to rediscover their own voices to facilitate healing.[91] Additionally, trauma-informed organizations engage and acknowledge the varied backgrounds, and possible trauma that service providers may also have and how that may affect victim interactions too.

The victim is often the most important source of evidence since many sexual assaults occur in private places with few or no witnesses. Furthermore, research shows that the victim

interview is one of the most important pieces of evidence in sexual assault crimes. Consequently, police interviews of sexual assault victims are often necessary if survivors wish to move forward with prosecution, even though interviewing victims about their experiences has the potential to be highly traumatic.[92]

Building trust with a victim is an especially important component of the interview process, and factors that influence supportive engagement can be communicated to the victim both verbally (e.g., words, tone) and through nonverbal cues (e.g., body language). Law enforcement has an opportunity when they interview victims to support survivors and build community trust by developing trauma-informed interviewing skills.[93]

Research shows that victims are more likely to be open and provide useful information when they are relatively relaxed, feel that they can trust the investigator, and do not feel threatened or accused by the investigator.[94] Law enforcement should focus on interactions that build rapport and are validating. Victims also should not be treated or questioned as "witnesses" to their own assaults and put on the defensive; rather, engagement should focus on empathic listening and asking questions to elicit further information about their experience.[95] For information about effective interview techniques, including Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviewing (FETI), see Appendix A.

Serial Perpetration and Future Victimization

A pilot research study by Case Western Reserve University to test 4,347 previously unsubmitted SAKs showed that further victimizations could have been prevented if SAKs were tested, and that the prevalence of serial perpetrators was much more common than previously believed. In January 2016, the study projected 1,290 indictments and 948 convictions, and a conservative estimate that a quarter of the perpetrators were serial offenders. The study also estimated that the total cost of sexual assault victimization based on intangible costs (e.g., pain and suffering and decreased quality of life, based on jury awards) and tangible costs (e.g., victimization-related costs such as medical costs and lost wages) was $203,768 per victim ($5,556 for tangible costs + $198,212 for intangible costs). Note that these estimates are at the low range of cost as they do not consider many long-term impacts such as disruptions in income and education or long-term mental health consequences. The researchers also estimated that, as a result of the task force's efforts to test SAKs and investigate and prosecute identified offenders (~25% of whom were estimated to be serial offenders), there was a community net cost-savings of $38.7 million due to avoiding future victimizations.[96]

Table 1.1 on the next page provides a review of the types of victimization most relevant to the *NoVA Change Process*. Primary and secondary victimization are well documented and

established in the field. Tertiary victimization speaks to the victimization based on systemic issues and is a relevant issue that should be considered as well.

Table 1.1. Forms of Victimization

Form of Victimization	Manifestation	Impacts
Primary	Sexual assault victimization	• Personal impact of elevated and continuous stress • Victim's neurobiological response to trauma (difficulty with memory recall, fragmentation) • Increased psychological symptomology [97]
Secondary	Victimization by systems, community, peers	• Complex systems (legal, medical, criminal justice) • Victim-blaming beliefs and treatment by professionals serving victims, family/friends, and others in the victim's social support system and community • Victim's needs are unmet, including expectations and perceptions about criminal justice system • Denial of important resources (medical testing, financial assistance, etc.) • Offenders not being held accountable[98]
Tertiary	Victimization by systemic SAK issues	• Victim expectation that SAK was tested at initial report • Future sexual assaults could have been averted [99] • Stigmatization of sexual assault survivors and cultural narratives that tolerate sexual assault [100]

Adapted with permission from Campbell, 2008; Campbell & Raja, 1999; and Ahrens, 2006.

Community Example: Secondary Victimization and Re-Traumatization in Detroit and Houston

Both the Detroit and Houston teams identified several major challenges with the notification process that have implications for future research. In communicating with victims, questions about the "why" (e.g., Why now, why not then? and Why was I treated the way I was back then?") were frequently difficult for personnel conducting notifications to answer. [101]

The Houston team noted that victims displayed a wide range of emotions during notification and some experienced re-traumatization. Victims voiced frustration and distress about their original contact with the criminal justice system, especially concerning delays in evidence testing. They recommended that law enforcement and victim service providers be aware of these difficulties and be proactive in their engagement with victims. This includes training on the impact of trauma and how biases and rape myths can affect contact with victims to help reduce the potential for re-traumatization. Victims also recommended that all parties in the criminal justice system have information about how professionals and the system can prevent secondary victimization, provide appropriate referrals or resources (victim advocates, SANE, support programs, etc.) for victims, and be empathetic in their responses to victims' questions.[102]

The Potential Consequences and Benefits of Victim Notification

It is clear that there are both potential consequences and benefits to victim notification related to trauma, timing, and the outcome of a case. Attention to the methods of notification as well as careful consideration prior to notification are important and potential ways to increase the benefit of victim notification and reducing secondary and tertiary victimization.

Psychological Consequences of Notifying Victims in Older Cases[103]

- Brings up memories or feelings about assault
- Triggers additional symptoms (e.g., flashbacks, nightmares)
- Worsens PTSD and other mental health issues
- Influences substance use
- Forces unwanted disclosure (e.g., having to tell a spouse or child who previously did not know about the assault)[104]

Benefit of Notification for Victims

While victim notification poses many potential risks, it also provides opportunities for re-engagement and positive outcomes. Victims interviewed about notification[105] said that the process could lead to a variety of benefits for themselves and others, such as:

- Validation of their experiences
- Empowering them with choice and control in the process
- Provision of justice
- Potential for offender accountability
- Crime prevention

Community Example: Positive Results of Victim Notification in Houston[106]

> Interview victims:
> - Wanted to hear about their cases and did not regret being re-contacted.
> - Appreciated the support and help of the justice advocate.
> - Had an identified suspect profile as a result of forensic analysis.
> - Heard there was new information to be investigated.
> - Discussed positive aspects of being contacted at this later date – they described themselves as more mature and able to talk about and process their trauma more fully.
> - Appreciated the choice and opportunity to participate in their cases moving forward.
> - Commended the sensitive, compassionate, flexible, and caring treatment from investigators at the time of current notification.

Impact of Trauma on Professionals

In addition to considering the trauma that victims experience, professionals themselves who work in sexual assault response (including those addressing untested SAKs) may experience stress, secondary traumatization, and burnout.[107] Although the lack of funding for staff and resources is a known contributor to untested SAKs, building individual and organizational resiliency can enhance the criminal justice response and help support victims and professionals in the field. Building resilience among professionals, on teams, in organizations, and in communities is an important subject for consideration on the broader issue of the re-traumatizing nature of untested SAKs.

Tools for Practice

Instructions: *As a multidisciplinary working group or agency, answer the questions below to build understanding around the contextual factors and catalyst for change in your community.*

Factor Types	Guiding Questions	Potential Impact on Victim Notification
Historical and Catalyst Factors	Describe the catalyst. What facilitated the change? Was it related to internal or external decisions or forces? Describe how any historical factors impacted the catalyst for change.	Analyze, contemplate, and discuss how the factors described in your responses may impact victim notification moving forward.
Community Factors	Describe any events or influences within your community that impact the context of moving forward with victim notification. Describe the cultures present within your community. Describe the related dynamics How might cultures and their dynamics in the community impact victim notification? What is important to consider with regard to victim notification? What are your community's demographics? Do inequities exist within your community based on demographics? What factors in your community that are important to consider as you prepare to work on victim notification?	Analyze, contemplate, and discuss how the factors described in your responses may impact victim notification moving forward.

Factor Types	Guiding Questions	Potential Impact on Victim Notification
Legal and Governmental Factors	What are the state statutes that influence victim notification? How have these statutes changed over time? Have there been changes in government, in resources, or in programs for the community that impact victim notification?	Analyze, contemplate, and discuss how the factors described in your responses may impact victim notification moving forward.
Relationship Factors	Describe key relationships between government services and nonprofits that serve victims. Describe the relationships between agencies that work collaboratively to respond to sexual assault. Describe your agency and its role within the community over time. How does your agency fit into the community context? What have the resources and funding looked like for the agencies that respond to sexual assault? Describe the current practices around sexual assault response. Who is involved? What do they do?	Analyze, contemplate, and discuss how the factors described in your responses may impact victim notification moving forward.

Trauma-Informed Community and Organizational Resources

Instructions: It is imperative that organizations and coalitions that work in sexual assault response services recognize the impact of trauma on individuals (survivors as well as front-line workers), organizations, and the wider community. Consult the resources below to ensure that a trauma-informed framework is built into the planning, development, and implementation of your NoVA protocol.

Trauma-Informed Communities

Alaska Resilience Initiative (n.d.). Tools for trauma-informed change. Retrieved from https://www.akresilience.org/traumainformed-change/

- Resource library for trauma-informed communities and organizations, featuring examples from Alaska: toolkits, trainings, documents, and other resources.

Kain, L. (2018). Be the spark: Igniting trauma-informed change within our communities. ACEs Connection. Retrieved from https://www.acesconnection.com/g/aces-in-education/blog/be-the-spark-igniting-trauma-informed-change-within-our-communities

- Utilizing the "pair of ACEs," which are adverse childhood experiences and adverse community experiences, this tool advocates for a trauma-informed framework over trauma-informed care.
- Frames ACEs as a public health and policy issue, in addition to a mental health issue
- Features instructions for developing and maintaining a trauma-informed community as well as examples and resources

Urban Institute (2014). Best and promising practices: Trauma informed community building-A model for strengthening communities in trauma affected neighborhoods. Retrieved from https://societyhealth.vcu.edu/media/society-health/pdf/Best-Practices-Trauma-TICB-12.3.14.pdf

- Explains the Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB) model, based on BRIDGE Housing Corporation's community building work in San Francisco, CA in public housing and notes that:
  - Adults, children, and families are often overwhelmed with trauma as a result of their living conditions and community.
  - "Traditional" models sometimes ignore or even exacerbate these triggers.
- Explores the 5 challenges trauma-impacted communities face: lack of trust and social cohesion; lack of stability, reliability, and consistency; disempowerment and lack of a sense of community ownership; inability to vision the future; breadth and depth of community needs
- The 4 principles of TICB are: do no harm, acceptance, community empowerment, and reflective process.

Secondary/Vicarious Trauma in Communities

Pfefferbaum, R. L., Pfefferbaum, B., & Van Horn, R. L. (2011, 2013 May). *Communities advancing resilience toolkit (CART) survey.* Oklahoma City, OK: Terrorism and Disaster Center at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Retrieved from

https://www.nctsn.org/measures/communities-advancing-resilience-toolkit-assessment-survey

- Survey instrument assesses a community's resilience across multiple domains (connection and caring, resources, transformative potential, disaster management, and information and communication).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n.d.). *Secondary traumatic stress: Fact Sheet for organizations employing community violence workers.* Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//secondary_traumatic_stress_community_violence_workers.pdf

- Community violence workers are particularly prone to exposure to Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS).
- Discusses how to identify STS in community violence workers, organizational responsibility to mitigate STS, and strategies to prevent or reduce STS.

Santa Barbara Response Network (2018). Retrieved from https://sbresponsenetwork.org/services

- Goal of Santa Barbara Response Network is to offer psychological first aid and provide support for resilient recovery from traumatic events in the community, such as: attempted or completed suicides; violent injuries and deaths; natural disasters; community crisis; and more.
- Provides training and resources for building a community response team for trauma

Oklahoma University Medicine (2017). Terrorism and Disaster Center. Retrieved from https://www.oumedicine.com/TDC

The Center's mission is to:

- Improve the standard of care and access to culturally proficient mental health services for children and families affected by terrorism and disasters.
- Develop, promote, and disseminate culturally informed disaster mental health services, interventions, and resources for children, families, schools, and communities.
- Provide training, consultation, and technical assistance related to mass trauma.

Medical University of South Carolina (n.d.) National Crime Victims Research & Treatment Center. Retrieved from https://academicdepartments.musc.edu/ncvc/

The Center's mission is to:

- Advance scientific and public understanding of the scope, nature, and mental health impact of exposure to crime and other traumatic events.
- Improve the mental health of victims of crime and other traumatic events through research, education, prevention, treatment, public policy consultation, and collaboration.

The National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project and National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2013). *Building cultures of care: A guide for sexual assault services programs.* Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. Retrieved from http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_guides_building-cultures-of-care.pdf

- A resource for sexual assault response service providers with guidance on: understanding trauma; defining trauma-informed services; core principles of trauma-informed services; spheres of implementation
- A guide for integrating trauma-informed services
- Describes an ecological understanding of trauma and offers training and guiding questions for implementation

National Sexual Violence Resource Center and International Association of Forensic Nurses (2014). *Resources for vicarious trauma. SANE Sustainability Education Project.* Retrieved from http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/nsvrc-publications_sane-mobile-app_resources-vicarious-trauma.pdf

- A list of online resources for vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue in SANE programs

Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (n.d.) *Compassion fatigue/vicarious trauma* [Webinar]. Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved from https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspCompassionFatigueTraining.cfm

- A two-day interactive training offered by the Office for Victims of Crime that explores self-care techniques as well as strategies managers can use to help ensure balance and self-care for those that they supervise. (The following flier offers instructions on how to schedule/access the training: https://www.ovcttac.gov/downloads/views/TrainingMaterials/TBR_Fliers/Compassion_Fatigue_508c_041816_DM.pdf

Office for Victims of Crime (2018). *The vicarious trauma toolkit.* Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved from https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/

- This toolkit includes resources tailored to certain fields (victim services, emergency medical services, law enforcement, and others) and provides information and guidance for organizations to address vicarious trauma needs of their staff.

Section 2: Readiness for Change

STEP 2: YOUR PERSONAL READINESS FOR CHANGE

What You Will Learn

- Increase your understanding of individual and personal factors that contribute to a person's readiness for change.
- Develop skills to assess your own personal readiness for change.
- Identify areas of strength and areas for growth among staff at your agency.

Before a change can occur, you must be ready and willing to carry out the change. This NoVA step presents the components of personal readiness, and the What You Need to Know section describes the important role of personal readiness. The Tools for Practice section includes personal readiness assessments that you and other members of your organization or team can use.

NoVA Step 2: Your Personal Readiness for Change

Practitioners will need "personal readiness" to commit to carrying out change. One major component of personal readiness is a commitment to the sexual assault response field and to victim-centered practice. Readiness also includes an understanding of your own experiences and worldview as well as a willingness to reflect on potential biases or blind spots, particularly in regard to members of marginalized communities.

Before you are personally ready, you will simply need the "bandwidth" or capacity to take on new roles and responsibilities. SAK testing and victim notification require a dedicated team of staff members or a great deal of flexibility to handle the extra work that staff members must take on in addition to their often-large workloads. It is important that people at all organizational levels have personal readiness so that staff receive the support they need from leadership to prioritize SAK testing and victim needs. Step 3 discusses the need for a "change maker" or "champion" – an individual who has high personal readiness for change and is also willing to lead others toward higher personal readiness.

It is at this intersection of personal commitment, self-reflection, institutional support, and adequate resources that agency and working group readiness for change can occur.

Personal Readiness in Memphis[108]

Memphis Police Department (MPD) and Shelby County Rape Crisis Center (SCRCC) had several advantages when it came to personal readiness for change:

- MPD command staff were on board with the belief that "every victim counts."
- MPD was willing to admit that they had made mistakes in the past. This idea came from the organizational level as well as from individual investigators who demonstrated the willingness to reflect critically on their own and others' past actions and the effects that those actions had on victims.
- MPD and SCRCC had a longstanding partnership, and therefore MPD was already familiar with, and working toward, victim-centered practice.

Figure 2.1. NoVA Change Process Step 2: Personal Readiness for Change
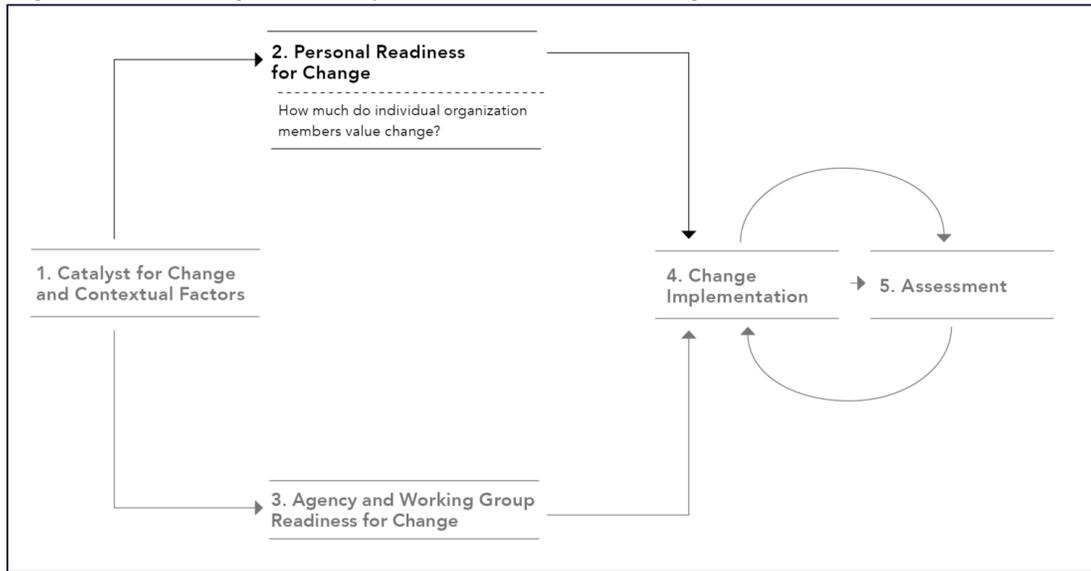
2. **Personal Readiness for Change**

- -

How much do individual organization members value change?

1. Catalyst for Change and Contextual Factors

4. Change Implementation

5. Assessment

3. Agency and Working Group Readiness for Change

What You Need to Know
Explicit and Implicit Bias

Bias, or prejudice for or against a particular thing or group, can take many forms. Some bias is explicit, meaning that individuals are aware of and may express their biased views without hesitation.[109] Bias can also be implicit or subconscious, meaning that it may influence someone's perceptions and behavior without the person being aware of it. Everyone has some type of bias. The biases held by service providers and criminal justice professionals can lead to discriminatory actions like racial profiling[110] and, in the case of sexual assault response, to secondary victimization. To learn more about implicit bias and assess your own biases, visit Harvard University's Project Implicit. Available at: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

The Role of Bias in Causing an Inventory of Untested SAKs

As discussed in Step 1, a number of issues, including a lack of resources, led to the large inventory of untested SAKs and related issues. However, in many jurisdictions, victim-blaming attitudes and stereotypes about victims also contributed to the situation.[111] Often, these biases have a racial or gendered component, or can be related to a bias against members of sexual minority groups (such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or LGBTQ individuals).[112]

Community Example: Stereotypes in Detroit

Using data from stakeholder interviews and police reports, researchers in Detroit[113] found that some law enforcement officers held inaccurate beliefs regarding the nature of sexual assault and had negative stereotypes about victims, including:

- The assumption that all victims were prostitutes, and that sexual assault reports by victims were really "deals gone bad."
- The belief that young victims were not credible because they were making sexual assault reports to cover up "bad behavior."
- The belief that victims who knew their assailants were less credible.

All of these examples point to biases and misconceptions to be challenged in order to make victim-centered change. These and other biases may be implicit[114] and can contribute to the inventory of untested SAKs and injustice in at least two ways. First, research indicates that when investigators do not believe victims, they are less likely to investigate cases thoroughly and to recommend testing SAKs from those victims.[115] Second, as discussed in Step 1, when victims perceive that investigators do not believe them, they are less likely to remain engaged and to want to cooperate with an investigation.[116] Victims may eventually stop contacting law enforcement and their cases may therefore be closed or suspended.

Personal Bias, Systemic Oppression, and Victim Experiences – The Ecological Model

In considering readiness for change and counteracting bias, it is helpful to understand how biases are perpetuated as well as challenged. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model[117] describes how an individual's development occurs through constant and ever-evolving interactions with their environment at multiple levels. This includes environmental influences from the individual's "microsystem" (immediate influences like family and friends) and through the societal "macrosystem" in which they live (including community norms and attitudes). This model is a way to describe how societal norms of sexism, homophobia, and racism can create bias, stereotypes, and misinformation for individuals and within a community. Conversely, individuals can help by recognizing and challenging biases in those around them and in society.

As shown in Figure 2.2, the ecological model can also be used to better understand different dimensions of victim experiences.[118] In the aftermath of an assault, victims are dealing with their personal experiences and treatment by service providers, the criminal justice system, and those around them. They are also impacted by micro, mezzo, and macro-level factors like discrimination based on gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, religion, age, and ability.[119]

Figure 2.2 The Ecological Model
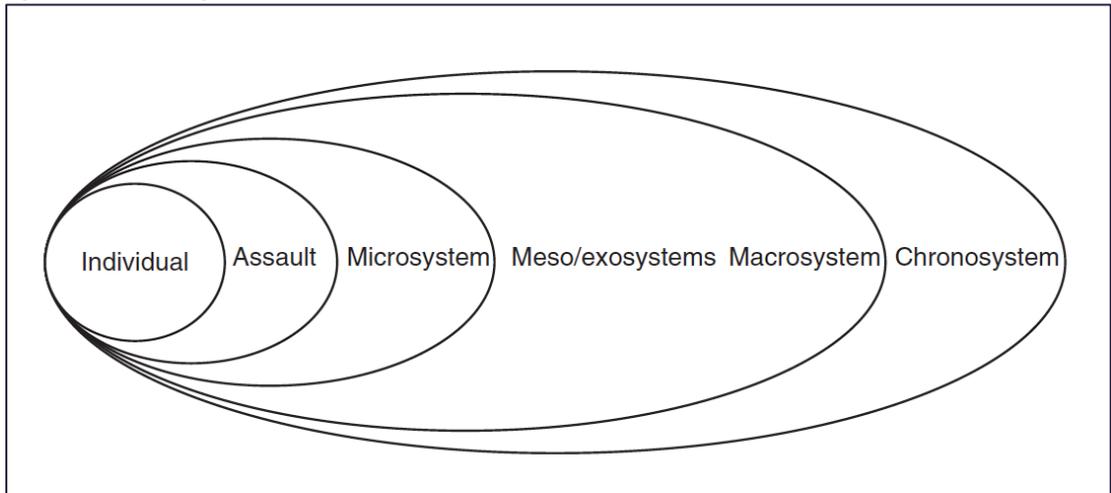
Adapted with permission from: Campbell, R., Dworkin, E., & Cabral, G. (2009). An ecological model of the impact of sexual assault on women's mental health. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse (10)*3, 228. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1524838009334456

Acknowledging and Combating Bias Makes Positive Change

Sexual assault is a crime that disproportionately effects certain groups, including women and persons who identify as members of gender and sexual minority communities (LGBTQ individuals).[120] Not coincidentally, women, people from gender and sexual minority communities, and people who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups are also the

subjects of pervasive and harmful stereotypes and myths in general.[121] For further discussion about implementing notification protocols that consider and counteract biases against these and other vulnerable groups, see Step 4.

An important way to ensure that victims receive the services and care they deserve is to identify and work to eradicate harmful biases and beliefs.[122] Even the best professionals require ongoing training and personal reflection, and should cultivate humility and an openness to personal growth. When responses to sexual assault are carried out effectively, victims may be less likely to experience secondary victimization and future victimization, and entire communities may be safer.[123] Although victims may have encountered secondary victimization in the form of bias by the criminal justice system at the time of their initial assault, notification presents a unique opportunity to respond in a victim-centered and compassionate manner. For example, investigators in Detroit described their satisfaction with the notification process and saw it as an opportunity to restore victims' faith in the police.[124]

Strategies for Combating Bias and Increasing Personal Readiness

At the agency level, leadership can enact policies that encourage personal readiness for change and examination of biases and past structural problems. For law enforcement, the DOJ put forth principles in 2015 to be integrated into policy, training, and protocols for preventing gender bias. These principles were developed with guidance from a variety of key stakeholders and elevated into practice by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. For full discussion of these principles, see DOJ's "Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence." [125] The most salient of these principles are:

- "Recognize and address biases, assumptions, and stereotypes about victims."
- "Treat all victims with respect and employ interviewing tactics that encourage a victim to participate and provide facts about the incident."
- "Investigate sexual assault or domestic violence complaints thoroughly and effectively."
- "Refer victims to appropriate services."
- "Maintain, review, and act upon data regarding sexual assault and domestic violence."

Factors That Should Not Be Used to Determine Victim Credibility[126]

DOJ presents a list of factors that have historically been used to question victims' credibility, but in actuality are based in harmful stereotypes:

- Delayed reporting
- Victim's history of making similar reports
- Victim's sexual history
- Victim's emotional state
- Victim's lack of resistance
- Victim's criminal history (including a history of prostitution)
- Evidence that the victim has a mental illness
- Evidence that the victim has a history of alcohol or drug abuse
- What the victim was wearing when the victimization occurred
- Lack of any obvious signs of physical harm to victim
- Victim's sexual orientation or gender identity or whether the victim was attacked by a person of the same sex

Accurate information and data can combat biases. If individual team members lack personal readiness for change, agency leadership or other team members may find it effective to present information about the success of past testing and notification projects. For example, in Detroit, some team members were initially reluctant to engage in the testing and notification process. However, the high rates of CODIS hits that arose from SAK testing served as evidence to convince many of those team members about the importance of the process.[127] Other strategies that appear to be effective at reducing bias include positive contact with members of stereotyped groups as well as the presentation of information that contradicts stereotypes and biases.[128]

Training that covers topics like the neurobiology of trauma (discussed in Appendix A), structural inequity, and cultural diversity can also be valuable opportunities to encourage personal reflection. In some states, training on these topics may be mandated. For example, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement requires training on cultural diversity for licensed law enforcement professionals.[129]

Community Examples: Detroit and Memphis

In Memphis, seasoned officers who had familiarity with victim-centered practices provided mentorship to new officers around interactions with victims.[130] The Detroit team found that training for all members of the team on the neurobiology of trauma had a large impact on their understanding of victim behaviors,[131] and the Memphis team indicated that training undertaken as part of the victim notification process benefitted both old and current cases.[132]

Tools for Practice

Secondary Victimization Scale

As described previously, secondary victimization refers to service delivery that permits and does not actively address biases that lead to victim-blaming and places the needs and priorities of the institutions charged with serving victims ahead of the needs and priorities of the victims themselves, which can re-traumatize victims and discourage them from engaging with reporting, investigation, and prosecution processes. Service providers who do not understand trauma or trauma-informed care can inadvertently contribute to secondary victimization. The following scale can help you determine your awareness of the role service providers may play in further harming victims of sexual assault and to consider your personal readiness in your current role to interact with victims in a way that does no harm.

General Harmful Behaviors and Practices of Social System Personnel

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1. The behavior of community professionals* can further traumatize rape victims.					
2. Community professionals don't pay enough attention to how their own behaviors could affect a rape victim's recovery.					
3. Community professionals may be doing more harm than good in their work with rape victims.					

* Community professional can include police, doctors, and mental health professionals.

System Specific Harmful Behaviors and Practices of Social System Personnel

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1. Reporting a rape to the criminal justice authorities can be psychologically detrimental to rape victims.					
2. Rape victims may feel traumatized by the medical rape exam.					
3. Mental health professionals engage in counseling practices that can further traumatize rape victims.					

Negative Impact of Contact with Social System Personnel

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1. Interacting with community professionals can leave rape victims feeling guilty about the rape.					
2. Interacting with community professionals can leave rape victims so upset that they are reluctant to seek further help.					
3. Interacting with community professionals can leave rape victims feeling bad about themselves.					
4. Interacting with community professionals can leave rape victims feeling distrustful of others.					
5. Interacting with community professionals can leave rape victims feeling depressed.					

Positive Impact of Contact with Social System Personnel

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1. It can be psychologically beneficial for rape victims to seek help from community professionals.					
2. Community professionals do a good job helping rape victims.					

Adapted with permission from: Campbell, R., & Raja, S. (1999). Secondary victimization of rape victims: Insights from mental health professionals who treat survivors of violence. *Violence and Victims, 14*(3), 261-275. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.14.3.261

Reflecting on Your Beliefs

In the scale above, a higher score indicates greater understanding of secondary victimization of sexual assault victims as a result of their interactions with various types of service providers. The scale can be used to help you reflect on your and your agency's role in perpetuating secondary victimization and how you can reduce potential harm toward victims.

Assessing Personal Bias and Beliefs

In this section, we begin to explore a few other types of beliefs and biases that may impact professional work. It is important to be aware of potential biases and how those might interfere with the development of trauma-informed and victim-centered notification practices/protocols. These abridged scales are designed to help identify possible areas of potential bias; they are not intended to be exhaustive. They can help to facilitate personal reflection and/or larger discussion on how biases may impact your work.

Read the following statements and decide how strongly you agree or disagree with each. See the section below these scales for guidance on how to reflect on and use the results.

Gender

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
Most women interpret innocent remarks as being sexist.					
Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.					
Women should be cherished and protected by men.					
Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.					
Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.					

Reprinted with permission from: Glick, P. & Fiske, S.T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 70*(3):491-512.

Race

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
It's a really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if people who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups would only try harder, they could be just as well off as people who are white.					
People who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups are responsible for creating much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today.					
There is not much discrimination against people who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States.					
Over the past few years, people who belong to racial and ethnic minority groups have gotten more than they deserve.					

Adapted with permission from: Henry, P. J., & Sears, D. O. (2002). The symbolic racism 2000 scale. *Political Psychology, 23*, 253-283; Sears, D. O., & Henry, P. J. (2005). Over thirty years later: A contemporary look at symbolic racism and its critics. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology. 37*, 95-150 retrieved from http://condor.depaul.edu/phenry1/SR2Kinstructions.htm

Sexual Orientation

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
The media devotes too much attention to the topic of homosexuality.					
If people who belong to sexual minority groups want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality.					
People who belong to sexual minority groups are immoral.					
People who belong to sexual minority groups should stop complaining about the way they are treated and get on with their lives.					

Adapted with permission from: Morrison, M.A. & Morrison, T.G. (2002). Development and validation of a scale measuring modern prejudice toward gay men and lesbian women. *Journal of Homosexuality, 43*(2), 15-37.

Reflecting on Your Beliefs

In all of the scales above, higher scores indicate more biased beliefs. This section can help you reflect on your results and beliefs during the *NoVA Change Process*.

Gender

The items in the gender scale describe ideas that reflect either "hostile" or "benevolent" sexism. Although some of the items, such as "women should be cherished and protected by men," may seem positive, these beliefs could actually be detrimental and devalue female victims' choice and voice throughout the criminal justice process. If service providers believe that women try to tease or control men, they might be more likely to question victims' motivations and credibility.

Race

Historically, people identifying as racial and ethnic minorities in your community have experienced inequities related to biased beliefs that create both subtle and blatant obstacles in their personal lives. The statements in the scale above are examples of some of these

biases. How do these beliefs impact the way you provide services to people who belong to racial minority groups? How have they impacted your ability to recognize and respect the needs of victims from these communities? What is the effect on people from racial minority groups when service providers display these attitudes? One resource for thinking about these questions comes from the organization, Fair and Impartial Policing. More information about their work and guidelines can be found at: https://fipolicing.com

Once you have had a chance to reflect, you should engage in dialogue with members of your community who are working to address racial bias who can provide additional information or resources about these issues and how they may impact your work.

Sexual Orientation

The items in the scale above reflect just some of the beliefs that may limit the access to services for people in sexual minority communities. People in sexual minority communities may include those who identify as LGBTQ and gender non-conforming. You may react to the way a victim identifies or presents themselves. If you agree with these statements, it is a good idea to reflect on how your beliefs might cause you to treat sexual minority victims differently or how it might impact their ability to access your services. For example, service providers who believe that people belonging to sexual minority communities are immoral may not respect their relationships or partners, or may act with hostility rather than compassion.

After you have had a chance to reflect, seek out resources online and in your community, and learn about and engage with those who are working to ensure sexual minority communities have equitable access to services in your area.

As mentioned earlier, this exercise is not intended to be exhaustive, but to begin to explore the biases that may impact professional work so that you can learn to counteract them.

One final example is included in Step 4's Tools for Practice section which relate to Adultism, see "Questions to Ask Yourself When Working with Juvenile Victims."

STEP 3: AGENCY AND WORKING GROUP READINESS FOR CHANGE

What You Will Learn

- Agency attributes and attitudes that contribute to readiness for change
- Knowledge about professional roles and collaboration efforts to address the issues surrounding untested SAKs
- The rationale for the multidisciplinary response approach
- Practical skills for navigating a multidisciplinary response

Agency and working group readiness for change must be cultivated in tandem with personal readiness. These concepts are inextricable, and lasting change toward victim-centered, trauma-informed work cannot be achieved without them. In this step, "agency" refers to an individual organization. "Working group" refers to a multidisciplinary group of professionals, like a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) or Coordinated Community Response (CCR) group. The What You Need to Know section will present evidence for multidisciplinary response as a best practice for victim notification and discuss common challenges in multidisciplinary work. The Tools for Practice section offers guidance on building effective teams and making decisions about your team.

It is just as important to consider bias as well as the dynamics of power and privilege at play within an agency or working group as it was when assessing personal readiness. This requires ongoing awareness and open collaboration among staff or group members.

NoVA Step 3: Agency and Working Group Readiness for Change

Research suggests that agencies can best address SAK testing and victim notification by working together in multidisciplinary groups.[133] Therefore, this step discusses the change process in terms of individual agency *and* working group readiness for change.

Figure 2.3. NoVA Change Process Step 3: Agency and Working Group Readiness for Change
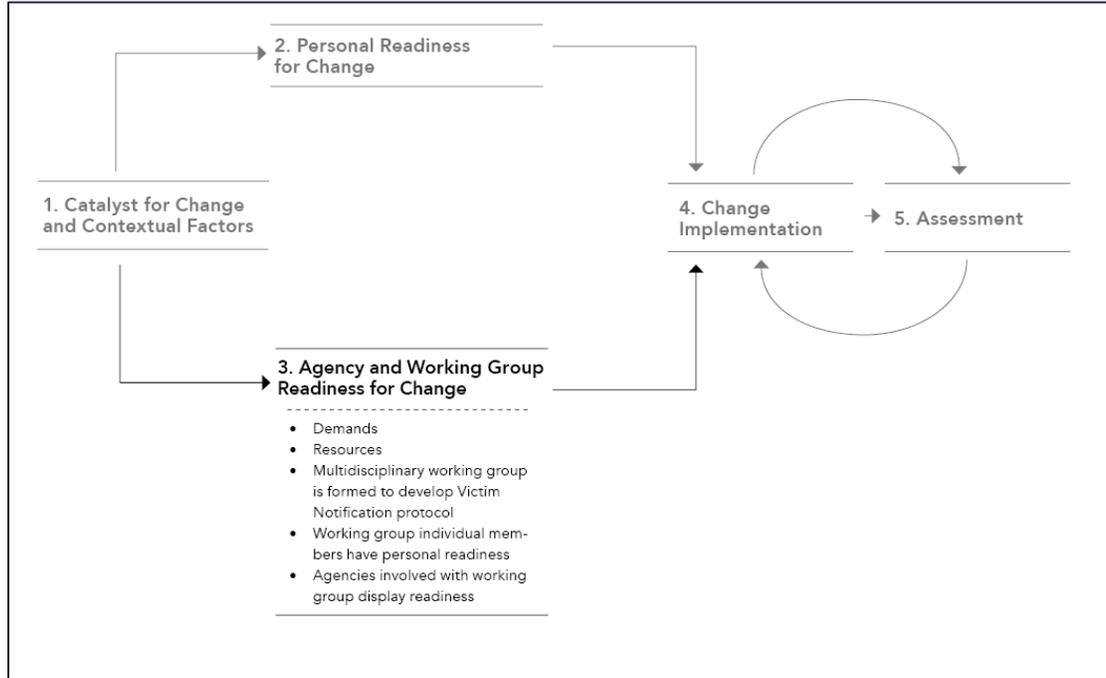
Agency Readiness for Change

An individual agency could be the police department or sheriff's office, a rape crisis center, the prosecutor's office, and others. To be ready to undertake change, individual agencies should have:

- Active and committed leadership.
- A victim-centered approach.
- A strategic plan in place.
- Active partnerships with other organizations.

In Memphis, agency readiness included support from agency leadership, a pre-existing commitment to operating in a victim-centered manner, and prior success working with other agencies on a draft victim notification protocol.[134]

Each individual agency in Memphis showed its readiness. For example:

- The Shelby County Rape Crisis Center made a commitment to having staff available for cold cases despite the high volume of current clients.
- The Memphis Police Department was able to create a dedicated DNA unit, thanks to support and buy-in from both their leadership and the mayor.
- The Attorney General's office had two staff members dedicated to cold cases.
  - The state crime lab committed to sending staff to meet with other agencies every week.

Working Group Readiness for Change

Readiness for change within a working group comes from the combination of personal readiness, agency readiness, and the catalyst for change. When all of these are in place, the multidisciplinary group can convene and function effectively.

In Memphis, working group readiness included:

- A victim-centered approach shared by all agencies involved.
- Communication and non-blaming dialogue, along with the recognition that change is uncomfortable.
- Trust and respect for the roles of other group members and a practice of group members "staying in their lanes."
- Committed, proactive leadership who found resources for the group.
- Sustained commitment and rapport-building through weekly task force meetings.

What You Need to Know

Why Make Change as a Multidisciplinary Group?

This step provides practical information on developing a multidisciplinary team of sexual assault response professionals who will be involved in creating and implementing victim notification protocols. Victims interact with many different agencies for varied purposes at many different stages following an assault. For this reason, it is necessary to have a holistic and comprehensive group of representatives from a number of professions who can all share valuable information about the needs of victims and challenges working across agencies and in different capacities.

A CCR works best when group members acknowledge each other's expertise and understand the roles and limitations of their partner organizations.[135] For help understanding common opportunities and challenges in developing multidisciplinary teams, see Tools for Practice at in this section.

CCR teams focus on communication, collaboration, and changing sexual assault response systems.[136] Similarly, SARTs (sometimes called by other names) seek to improve the response to sexual assault by coordinating the services of sexual assault responders. The responders involved in a SART may include law enforcement, prosecutors, healthcare professionals, advocates, victim services professionals, and other relevant stakeholders or community members.[137]

The multidisciplinary approach also requires time and participation from diverse disciplines. Although creating a team may be a requirement for a grant or could simply be practical from a resource-sharing perspective, committed partners have the potential to create agency and system-level change as well as to create a victim notification protocol that will work best for the community and victims themselves.[138] [139] [140] Building a successful victim notification protocol requires active partnerships across multidisciplinary teams who are engaged in sharing research, information, and resources.[141]

SARTs that include a broad range of professions have greater perceived legal impact regarding victim participation in the criminal justice system, law enforcement processing of cases, and prosecution.[142] NIJ recognized that a team of professionally diverse responders improves the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases, and therefore made the use of multidisciplinary teams a requirement for funded research on responses to unsubmitted kits in Detroit and Houston.[143] The BJA also recognized the importance of multidisciplinary teams by releasing a SAK initiative grant solicitation that included multidisciplinary work as a focus. Literature reviews on the value of CCRs in other forms of interpersonal violence underscore the importance of national protocols and the multidisciplinary approach overall.[144]

Resource: National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits[145]

> NIJ's report, "National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach," offers leadership and guidance on multidisciplinary response, including using a trauma-focused and victim-centered model, engaging victim advocates throughout the process, and intentionally involving underrepresented and underserved voices from the community. The report also provides information about sexual assault forensic exams, transparency and accountability, investigation, and SAK processing.
>
> The report is available at: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250384.pdf

How to Establish a Multidisciplinary Group

To identify essential stakeholders, first ask who in the community plays a role in responding to sexual assault. Which institutions, agencies, or individuals could a victim interact with in the wake of a sexual assault, including through sexual assault forensic exams and sexual assault investigations?[146] A functional group should include comprehensive representation from local agencies engaged in working with victims; group members can be professionals with or without direct victim contact.

It is essential to consider unique community factors and political dynamics in group activities and decision-making. For more information about evaluating community-level contextual factors, see Step 1. Table 2.1 provides examples of team members and their potential roles on a multidisciplinary notification team. Additionally, remember that many geographic areas have multiple jurisdictions, and it is important to engage with all of them, not just the largest.

While there are a number of individuals to consider including in your group, it is also important to start small, stay flexible as you are getting established, and grow thoughtfully.[147]

Table 2.1 Group Member Roles[148]

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Law Enforcement	This group is often the first line of response to victims and investigates sexual assaults	Patrol officer	• First line of response to victims, and may influence the course of an investigation and victims' willingness to participate • Provide information on local populations
		Sex crimes investigative unit	• Investigate • Notify victims • Provide case status information • Educate team about local ordinances and criminal justice issues
		Property room/evidence management	• Provide updates on SAK submission and other evidence collection • Provide history on storage of evidence (i.e., where and how stored, for how long)

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Advocacy	To promote victims' rights and provide emotional, physical, and economic support services	Community-based advocate	• Notify victims; provide support, follow up services, and referrals to victims; coordinate actions of other team members involved with the case • Prioritize needs and voices of victims • Provide an "outside" perspective to criminal justice system
		System-based advocate	• Notify victims, provide support and follow up services, and coordinate actions of other team members involved with the case • Prioritize victim needs within law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices (follow-up, support services)

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Medical	Provide sexual assault evidence collection and victim medical care	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SANE/SAFE)	• Assist in case reviews and provide education on medical literature • Provide history of change in SANE/SAFE exams over time (new forms, standardization of kits, different information collected at times)
		Hospital administration	• Educate team on coordination with hospitals • Act as a liaison with medical community
		EMT/EMS	• Provide education on emergency medical procedures and crime scene preservation • Provide testimony

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Crime Laboratory	This group preserves and analyzes SAKs and other forensic evidence as well as provides expert testimony	Analyst	• Analyze SAKs
		Management	• Review evidence collection procedures, educate team about analysis and forensic science
Prosecution	This group is responsible for investigating and trying criminal cases against offenders	Specialty prosecutor (juvenile or adult sex crimes)	• Make decisions about prosecution of cold cases • Provide updates about prosecution of cases, educate team about legal issues
Research	Research and evaluation expertise; emphasize neutrality, evidence-based practice	Victim-focused	• Provide information about victim needs, trauma responses, and ethical notification practices
		Criminology-focused	• Provide information about effective criminal justice practices and offender characteristics

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Higher Education	Students on campus are at high risk for sexual assault and can utilize separate reporting processes and are eligible to receive unique accommodations through Title IX	Title IX personnel	• Educate about gender disparities and sexual assault on campus
		Campus police	• Provide information about investigating sexual assaults on campus
		Counseling center	• Provide information about mental health support for students
		Women's resource center	• Focus on needs of women on campus, influence campus culture
Child and Adult Protective Services (CPS/APS)	To investigate and take steps to protect vulnerable populations, including adults with disabilities and children	Administration	• Provide macro view of sexual victimization, prevention, and intervention
		Investigators	• Provide case updates and practice experience

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Community Social Service Providers	Connection to special populations more likely to be disengaged from criminal justice system and vulnerable to being targeted by offenders	LGBTQ health and service providers	• Educate about LGBTQ considerations, prevention, and outreach
		Mental health providers	• Educate team about PTSD, trauma responses, and mental health treatment
		Homeless service providers (agencies, shelters)	• Educate about considerations for homeless individuals, violence prevention, and outreach
		Drug and alcohol service providers	• Educate about considerations for victims with drug and alcohol dependency
Correctional Institutions (jail, prison)	Incarcerated individuals are vulnerable to sexual assault	Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) coordinator	• Educate about legal requirements and issues surrounding sexual assault in correctional settings

Continued on next page.

Group/ Organization	Reason for Inclusion	Title or Department	Role with Victims and on Multidisciplinary Notification Team
Native American and Native Alaskan Communities	These communities often have completely different legal systems, and individuals within these communities are vulnerable to sexual assault	Tribal police, tribal government leaders	• Focus on cultural competence and educate about Native American and Alaskan legal systems
Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities	Cultural considerations, disconnected from police, and less likely to report	Faith leaders, community organization leaders	• Focus on cultural competence and meeting needs of diverse communities
Local Government Officials	Develop policies and allocate resources to assist victims	Government officials (e.g., Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice)	• Provide leadership and make decisions about implementation policies; mobilize resources[149]
Faith-based Groups	Part of social service networks for referrals and community support[150]	Faith leaders, community members, and faith-based counselors	• Focus on victims' spiritual needs and can identify gaps in services and provide faith-based prevention education

Adapted from: Office for Victims of Crime. (2011). *SART toolkit: Develop a SART.* Retrieved from https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/sartkit/develop/build-decide-e.html

Confidentiality with Community- and System-Based Advocates

> Community-based advocates are individuals based in local nonprofits or community
> organizations who can offer confidentiality to victims. Because system-based advocates
> are required to provide information to their colleagues, they cannot offer confidentiality
> to victims. Advocates in both roles should provide complete, accurate information about
> confidentiality to victims at the outset of their work.[151]

Identify a Multidisciplinary Group

The selection of the representative(s) from each agency should be intentional and target
experienced individuals from all relevant disciplines. It is also important that
multidisciplinary teams actively seek to be culturally diverse in terms of representation, and
as inclusive of diverse and underrepresented voices as possible.[152] [153] Culturally proficient
and experienced professionals, who have nuanced understandings of the effects of
victimization and the practical knowledge of how the criminal justice and advocacy systems
work, are generally those who are best able to serve victims.[154]

Certain disciplines, especially those with high rates of interagency turnover, need multi-level
representation and diverse perspectives at meetings. This can create important buy-in from
frontline workers, such as patrol officers and hotline advocates. Therefore, it is important to
have a high-level champion as well as a mid-level manager and a frontline worker.[155] Note
that the need for multi-level representation might be different based on discipline and
context.

Identify Change Makers/Champions

Representation from each agency must include a change maker, sometimes referred to as the
"champion" of the issue. This person should be someone who has expertise in their own
discipline, credibility, influence, and who is able to allocate or advocate for resources and
make decisions within their agency. Research suggests that multidisciplinary teams should
identify and develop change maker/champions from across disciplines to help address the
challenges surrounding the victim notification process.[156] The representative must have the
authority to make decisions on behalf of their organization and to communicate information
to their organizations for implementing practices. Below are several pertinent considerations
when choosing representatives.

Change Maker/Champion Criteria

This group member has:	Yes	No
Valuable expertise and authority in their discipline/field		
The credibility and the trust of other group members		
Commitment to victim-centered standards		
Good communication skills		
Commitment to team goals		
Proven leadership skills and track record of results in building community buy-in		

Identify Host Agency and Leadership Structure

The host agency and group leader will also have a significant impact on the culture of the group. An effective leader is one that is able to align the roles of team members in a way that empowers members to take advantage of inter- and intra-agency opportunities and to problem solve effectively. Teams without clear direction, decision-making, or leadership struggle to understand member roles and responsibilities, which can negatively impact the success of the initiative.[157][158]

Challenges, however, are unavoidable and necessary components of multidisciplinary teamwork; often, they are the catalyst for change. Opportunities for collaborative change include educational opportunities (e.g., victim-centered, trauma-informed trainings), resource allocation, and shared decision making. Challenges can spur the initiative to improve services for sexual assault survivors.[159]

Although each community and, therefore, each response team is different, the processes outlined in the "Opportunities and Challenges" worksheet found in the Tools for Practice section of this step will help teams identify a host agency as well as the challenges and opportunities inherent to each agency's participation in multidisciplinary responses.

Groups should quickly establish who has the final decision-making authority within the group and clarify which decisions are and are not open to multidisciplinary input.[160] Group members should expect disagreement, and should employ preventative conflict management strategies that seek to avoid conflict when possible and build capacity for conflict resolution.[161] Ultimately, it is important for group leaders and members to be committed to collaboration and a victim-centered approach.

Develop Commitment and Buy-in

Effective multidisciplinary groups are not something that form overnight. It is a long process that requires building trust and commitment among members. When group members trust and respect each other, there is opportunity for mutual support and for creating shared

expectations. It is important to recognize that individual buy-in and commitment may vary, and that group members may have entered the field of sexual assault response for different reasons. Some are in the field because of their own lived experience, a choice, or personal passion; some are in the field by necessity, assignment, chance, or opportunity.[162] [163]

Hold Consistent Meetings and Consider Location

Some multidisciplinary groups meet once a month, some meet once a quarter. Some meet in person, some have conference call meetings intermittently and only a few in-person meetings a year. Group members should agree on the best option for everyone in the group and for their community, but they should establish and maintain some type of consistent meeting schedule. This formal meeting process is important, as multidisciplinary groups with higher degrees of formalization and greater information sharing are more likely to be effective. Additionally, consistent processes can serve as a strong backbone for the group in the event of member turnover.[164]

In-person meetings can have several advantages over collaborating via teleconference or similar technology. First, in-person meetings allow for increased trust and rapport-building. Additionally, when groups meet in person, there may be a greater likelihood that everyone will have their voices and concerns heard. Non-verbal cues are visible at in-person meetings that are not on conference call meetings. However, communities must recognize the extent of their resources, which may be limited due to geographical and economic barriers. This may be particularly true in rural communities where there may not be a SANE in the community, where a state crime lab or contracted lab is used for testing, or when members may not be able to travel to meet in person frequently. Groups that cannot feasibly meet in person altogether on a regular basis should plan to supplement in-person meetings with frequent communication by email, phone, and video conferencing and can offer remote participation options to certain members.

Another important consideration is the location of group meetings. Ideally, groups should strive for a central location. If no central location is available, groups should rotate between locations for meetings so that no one group or agency is favored. Locations should also have easily accessible parking and all group members should have access to the building; for example, if meetings take place in a building with high security or that requires a badge to access, every effort should be made to make everyone feel welcome.

Identify Clear Goals and Roles

Forming a multidisciplinary collaboration has inherent challenges, especially when leaders from different agencies and disciplines are working together. It is therefore important for group members to establish clear boundaries, roles, and group goals early on in a group's development. Group formation should start with:

- Decisions about who will lead and/or coordinate the group.

- Decisions about designating an administrator who will send emails about monthly meetings, collect attendance records, and take meeting notes.
- Expectations about attendance and participation.
- Expectations about deadlines.

Ideally, members of the group should work together to develop their goals. Goals should be task-oriented and specific. Larger collaborative groups should consider establishing small subgroups for specific tasks and goals.

Memorandums of Understanding to Clarify and Enhance Collaboration

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are documents developed with the participation of all parties involved that outline the expectations for partnership, including collective goals and member and agency roles. The process of developing the MOU can provide structure for conversations as well as a formal written reference document for the group.[165]

Several examples of MOUs for SART planning can be found online. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services provides an example in their report, *Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART): A Model Protocol for Virginia,* and the Office on Victims of Crime provides various example MOUs in their SART team planning resources. [166] [167]

Foster Relationships and Communication

For multidisciplinary groups to function effectively, lines of communication between group members and agencies must remain open. Frequent, open, and honest communication will help group members stay on the same page about the overall goal of collaboration and up-to-date about individual cases.[168] Here are several best practices for facilitating effective communication:

- All members should be accessible by direct phone numbers and/or email addresses for ease of communication across disciplines, agencies, and levels.[169]
- Issues that arise on the front lines of sexual assault response should be dealt with directly by being brought immediately to the attention of the agency representative who is part of the working group.[170]
- Group members should feel comfortable voicing any concerns that arise, be willing to acknowledge mistakes, and accept input from other disciplines, survivors, and the community.[171]
- Group members should familiarize themselves with the work of their partner agencies. For example, members can tour other agencies and discuss other projects each agency is working on.[172]

- The group should provide comprehensive training to all members. If multiple practitioners will be working together on an individual case, each should be thoroughly briefed ahead of time.[173]
- Group members should be sensitive to rules about disclosure of information, which may vary across disciplines.[174] Confidentiality and disclosure among the group should be clearly defined and stated so that all members are aware of the group's position.

Focus on Establishing a Culture

In any working group, it is important to create a culture thoughtfully and pay attention to the group culture that develops. For a multidisciplinary group working on victim notification in cold cases, it is vital that the group culture be victim-centered, first and foremost, as well as respectful of all group members' and their roles. Groups should also expect challenges, and acknowledge that there is no one perfect way to notify victims. Groups should start small and be flexible.[175]

Communicate with the Media and Community

Addressing victim notification in cold cases may necessitate working with the media and reaching out to the community. This can include both proactive communication, such as getting the word out to victims about "opt-in" notification programs, and reactive communication, such as responding to media or community concerns about untested SAKs or sexual assault in general.

Public communication can prove challenging. The group's resources (financial and time) may be limited, making it difficult to develop and distribute outreach materials like brochures and emails.[176] Group members, or a smaller task force of group members, should decide on a plan for community outreach that acknowledges community and cultural context and provides resources for managing public communication. When the media becomes interested in the work of the group, it is important to establish a plan to protect victim confidentiality as well as the safety of victims, group members, offenders, and family members whose names may have been made public.[177] One way to protect victim confidentiality is to use pseudonyms or only the initials of the victim and to ensure that any potentially identifying is removed when filing paperwork that could be made public.

Protecting Victim Confidentiality

It is important to consider victim confidentiality and privacy throughout our interactions and as cases move through the criminal justice system. Agencies use different techniques to shield and protect victim information such as pseudonyms, initials, or a numerical assignment. The first step is to review any existing policies you have to protect victim information from public dissemination or use. It may also be helpful to work with your local or state victim services agencies to determine if there are any additional protections available to victims of sexual assault through victims' rights laws or related legislation. As victim information flows from agency to agency, it is important to coordinate the protection of identifying information across documents.

Community Example: Applying NoVA in Memphis[178]

Critical elements developed from personal readiness assessment:

- Belief that "every victim counts"
- Commitment to the field

Critical elements developed from agency readiness assessment:

- Organizational support
- Moving toward victim-centeredness
- Strategic planning
- Active partnerships
- History of each organization
- Memphis Police Department conducted early SAK inventory
- Early group work on victim notification protocol
- Early group work success

Critical elements developed from working group readiness assessment:

- Victim-centered approach
- Communication and non-blaming dialogue
- Leadership
- Mission-focused investment
- Sustained commitment
- Weekly task force meetings
- Right people in the right place
- Group members respect each other's roles

The key components set out in this step provide a framework for developing successful multidisciplinary teams that include all relevant disciplines with the flexibility to incorporate new expertise and resources as they emerge. Teams that are proactive about their dynamics and anticipate opportunities and challenges, like issues of power and group status, internal and external communication, and member engagement, are more likely to succeed. Establishing a team culture that is victim-centered can help with building cohesiveness and long-term success.

Tools for Practice

Many important processes in team building need to occur at inception in order to best assess the inherent challenges and opportunities that will impact a group's success. To help develop awareness of the complex issues surrounding team development in victim notification, please complete the following skill building exercises. It is important to remember that team dynamics are fluid, and that there is always potential for unanticipated challenges. However, strong team communication and collaboration provides a solid foundation for tackling challenges as they arise.

Team Building Skills Worksheet

Think about the following questions when building your team.

1. **Representation**: Does the team have representation from the primary disciplines involved in responding to sexual assault? Does it have the flexibility to grow?

2. **Change Maker/Champion:** Can the team identify members from across disciplines who are committed to victim-centered responses and procuring resources to support long-term change and positive outcomes for victims?

3. **Multi-Level Representation:** Does the team have diverse membership not only across but within disciplines? (Ideally, this allows for better representation.)

4. **Commitment and Buy-in:** Does the team work to create an open culture where members respect and trust each other? Does the team share goals that are visibly supported by the community?

5. **Challenges and Barriers:** Does the team have a continuous process for identifying and addressing possible challenges and barriers to maintaining commitment and buy-in for the shared goal?

6. **Central Location/Consistent Meetings:** Does the team have a central meeting location for in-person meetings and an established and consistent scheduled meeting time?

7. **Clear Goals/Roles:** Does the team work to create shared goals that reflect victim needs and priorities? Does the team articulate clear expectations and clear roles for each member and build in accountability for tasks/activities necessary to implement victim-centered response?

8. **Relationships and Communication:** Does the team prioritize proactive and open communication and victim-centered decision making?

9. **Internal:** Does the team encourage continuous engagement and strong communication with members/agencies/institutions?

10. **External**: Does the team engage in proactive communication with the media and community? Does the team convey a united message?

Busch-Armendariz, N., Sulley, C., Hoefer, S., Backes, B., Dempster, M., & Thompson, J. (2019). Notification for victims of sexual assault (NoVA): A guide for communities with untested sexual assault kits. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin. © 2019 Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault. All rights reserved.

11. **Establishing a Culture:** Does the team develop expectations around a victim-centered philosophy, confidentiality, internal decision-making, collaboration among partners, participation, role expectations, and conflict management?

12. **Leadership:** Does the team have a leader who has experience leading, brings valued expertise, is an effective communicator, a great problem-solver, trusted by membership, skilled at relationship building, and demonstrates a strong commitment to victim-centered response and tackling the challenges that come with victim notification?

Instructions: *The following survey can be used to assess a multidisciplinary team's readiness to collaborate. This survey can be administered within a fully-formed or developing working group to determine readiness for the development of a victim notification protocol. Facilitation of the survey may be led by a working group coordinator or other involved leader. There is no expectation that any team would be fully "ready" in each of these areas, so responses should reflect the current reality. This survey can be used to assess where agencies may need more information, overall interest and understanding of the process of victim notification protocol development, communication gaps, information gaps, and the current state of collaboration. It is expected that stakeholders will have differing viewpoints on the question responses. The ongoing process should involve discussions to acknowledge, address, and work to reconcile perspectives in order to productively move forward. This exercise is intended to be a beginning step to get the working group started on the same page.*

Team composition

To what extent does the composition of your team reflect the community and project need?

Our existing or proposed team has	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Active membership from each of the core agencies (law enforcement, medical, prosecution, victim advocacy, corrections)						
The needed representation from both criminal justice and community based agencies that will help to improve services to <u>all</u> victims in our communities						

Our existing or proposed team has	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Members who are knowledgeable about their agency's current response to sexual assault						
Members who are established and credible professionals in their agency and discipline						
Participating agencies whose leadership is fully informed and willing to contribute to the project's goals and requirements						
Members who have the ability to make decisions and commitments on behalf of their agency						

Action steps:

How will your team improve team composition and membership?

1.
2.
3.

Commitment of participating agencies/team members

Rate the extent to which each proposed and/or existing participating agency has demonstrated their commitment to the project in the areas described below.

Each participating agency will:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Commit to enable consistent representation on the team (have the same people attend as much as possible)						
Support their team representative's regular attendance at monthly team meetings						
Support their team representative's use of time to be actively involved in the team's projects						
Support the design, review, training, monitoring, and evaluation of protocol for responding to sexual violence and commit to having all of their staff use it						

Each participating agency will:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Invest in-kind resources, such as meeting space, mileage reimbursements, and additional staff time for team activities						
Look for additional ways to make the project successful in improving the response to sexual assault victims/survivors						

Action steps:

How will your team ensure consistent commitment to the project?

1.
2.
3.

Current understanding of sexual assault

While knowledge and experience in the field of sexual violence varies within teams, this exercise is intended to assess how knowledgeable the team is as a whole about sexual violence.

Our team as a whole is knowledgeable about:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Common reactions victims/survivors of sexual violence experience						
The criminal justice response to sexual assault						
Who are the victims and perpetrators of sexual violence						
How to professionally, respectfully, and comfortably interact with victims/survivors						
How a victim-centered response differs from a system-centered response						
The common misconceptions surrounding sexual violence						

Our team as a whole is knowledgeable about:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
The best practices for their own field/discipline/agency for responding to sexual violence						
The roles of other team members' and their agencies in the response to sexual violence						

Action steps:

How will your team increase and utilize its members' knowledge about sexual violence?

1.
2.
3.

Project fit with existing efforts and community goals

To what extent will participation in this project fit into and/or further existing goals of the team and its participating agencies?

Project participation is a good fit with our team because:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Each participating agency knows how it furthers their agency goals						
Each participating agency has the resources it needs to actively participate						
The time is right for this collaborative project						
There is general support for this project within the communities served by our participating agencies						

Action steps:

How will your team determine whether the project is a good fit for the community and its needs?

1.
2.
3.

General Team Preparation

To what extent is the team ready to begin this project?

Our team has:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
A team coordinator/agency identified that will have the time and skills required to lead the project						
Members who recognize a need for an improved, more coordinated response to sexual assault cases						
Participating agencies that encourage communication among staff in both formal meetings and in informal ways						
Members willing to sign memorandums of understanding or other agreements between the core agencies that support team's mission						

Our team has:	Very true	Somewhat true	Do not know	Somewhat untrue	Not true	Explain
Members willing to engage in in-depth discussions and make compromises in an effort to better serve victims/survivors of sexual assault						
Members who are dedicated to the idea that we can make this project happen						
Members who believe that what the team will accomplish would be difficult for any one agency to do alone						

Action steps:

How will your team prepare to transition the project from planning to action?

1.
2.
3.

Adapted with permission from: Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault: Sexual Violence Justice Initiative (2010). *Readiness assessment survey: SART tools and resources.* Retrieved from https://www.mncasa.org/sexual-violence-justice-institute/sarts-tools-resources/

Instructions: Once a team is established, use this worksheet to assess and inventory the tenets of collaboration within your group.[179] Once you understand strengths and gaps in collaboration, the group can build or improve upon collaboration.

Tenets of Collaboration	Examples and Rationale	Check if Present	Ways to Build or Improve this Tenet
Building relationships and buy-in	Strong relationships and member buy in are critical to collaboration and can include active participation, an openness between law enforcement and community advocates, members acting as a bridge back to their agency's leadership, and more.		
Getting the consistent participation of champions with influence in their organizations and communities	Champions for a cause are necessary to influence others and make changes within organizations and communities.		
Developing and fostering commitment and investment	Working collaboratively on an initiative to improve victims' experiences and criminal justice outcomes should create a sense of commitment and investment in the work, its purpose, and the process.		
Formalizing the process	Developing a process to formalize the working relationships and goals helps to create a more successful partnership and initiative.		
Obtaining resources	Allocating personnel and funding towards an initiative helps to make it successful.		

Tenets of Collaboration	Examples and Rationale	Check if Present	Ways to Build or Improve this Tenet
Practicing courage and vulnerability	Organizations with varying missions who come together for a collective purpose will have to have difficult conversations in order to gain trust and build relationships to do the work.		
Taking action to create change	Develop and implement a plan to improve victim-centered practices within organizations that make our group a system of services.		

Reprinted with permission from: Busch-Armendariz, N.B., Sulley, C., & Hill, K. (2016). The blueprint for campus police: Responding to sexual assault. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from:

https://utexas.app.box.com/v/blueprintforcampuspolice

Instructions: *Fill-in this worksheet and customize it with your own answers to start a process for selecting a host agency. These are not the only potential host agencies, but represent typical options in a community. Some opportunities and challenges are included as examples.*

Host Agency	Opportunities for Collaboration	Challenges in the Process
Law Enforcement Agency	- Will have access to current and complete information about individual cases and overall trends and statistics - Well-versed in criminal justice process and system - May already have built up trust in community and with victims - Other [Fill In]:	- May be offender-centered - May be more difficult for non-law enforcement members to access buildings due to security - Some victims may distrust due to history - Other [Fill In]:
Crisis Center, Advocacy	- Able to help maintain victim-centered approach - May already have built up trust in the community and with victims - Other [Fill In]:	- May have a historically difficult relationship with law enforcement - Other [Fill In]:
Hospital, Forensic Medical Team	- Coordinator of forensic medical team might have funding available for them so position isn't grant dependent[180] - Hospitals may be easily accessed by all group members and have available space for meetings - Other [Fill In]:	- May be overly focused on evidence retention and not on victim experience/care - Other [Fill In]:

Host Agency	Opportunities for Collaboration	Challenges in the Process
Crime Lab	- Has current information about status of testing SAKs - Other [Fill In]	- May be overly focused on limited crime lab resources - May have limited meeting space - May have limited contact with media or community - Other [Fill In]:
Prosecution	- Has current information about status of sexual assault cases in the court system - Understands what evidence is necessary and helpful when prosecuting a case - Other [fill in]:	- May find it challenging to balance victim-centered practices with needs for prosecution - May have limited time to meet - Other [Fill In]:
Other Key Stakeholders	[Fill In]:	[Fill In]:

Section 3: Making Change and Assessment

STEP 4: IMPLEMENTING CHANGE, CREATING YOUR PROTOCOL

What You Will Learn

- Elements for NoVA protocol development
- Practical application of victim-centered and trauma-informed notification strategies and concepts
- Strategies to address barriers that arise during notification

After you and your community partners assess context, readiness, and form your multidisciplinary group, you are ready to begin developing and implementing your notification protocol. Creating and carrying out your protocol is the "change" for which you have been preparing. This step is about the practical aspects of victim notification and building a protocol for your community, including notification contact methods, information about the role of advocates in the notification process, and special circumstances like notification with juveniles and non-report SAKs.

NoVA Step 4: Change Implementation

"Making change" means developing and implementing a victim-centered, trauma-informed victim notification protocol. During development, your working group will make many decisions, including under what circumstances and when victims will be notified, who will conduct notification, what messages will be communicated to victims, and more. Using policies and practices systematically will help your group respond effectively to victims' needs, create lasting change, and aid in investigations of cases with formerly untested SAKs.

Figure 3.1. NoVA Change Process Step 4: Change Implementation
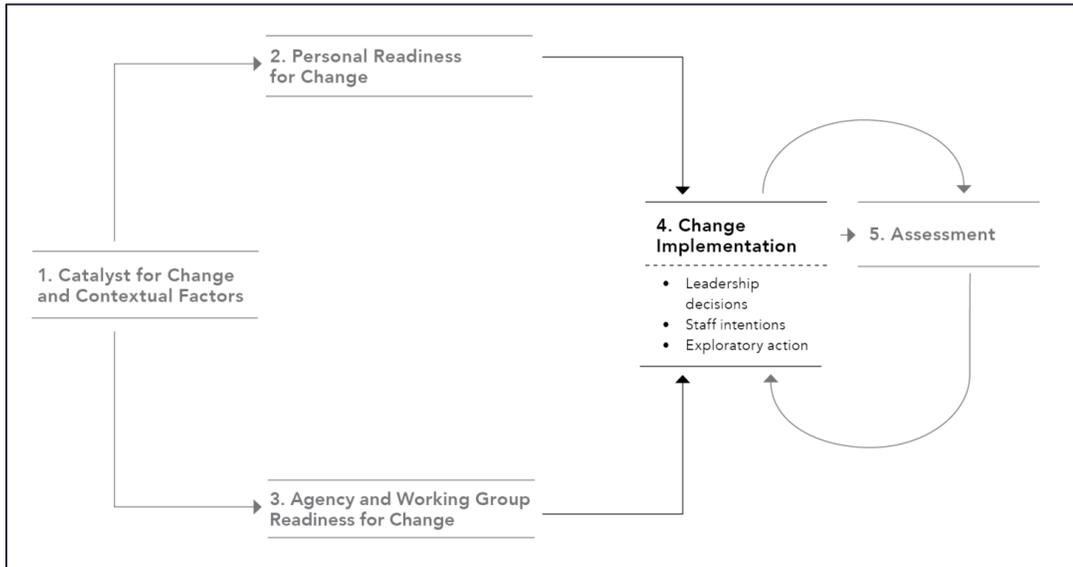
Community Example: Making Change in Memphis

In Memphis,[181] the working group implemented the following as part of their SAK testing and notification protocol:

- Investigator and advocate team notification
- A hotline available for victims to request information about the status of their case
- Annual SAK Summit meetings with other jurisdictions for information sharing
- DNA unit created
- Attorney designated to cold cases
- Monthly website reports on the SAK testing and notification process
- Biweekly meetings with City Hall
- All partners share information with community

What You Need to Know

Notification protocols should be flexible (i.e., able to respond to unique circumstances.) Effective protocols are location-sensitive, responsive to the needs of individual victims, and considerate of the availability of community agency-level resources.[182]

Principles in Practice

When creating your protocol, use the NoVA Guiding Principles (victim-centered, trauma-informed, and evidence-informed practices that follow procedural and criminal justice models) as the foundation of all decisions. While there is not a one-size-fits-all model of victim notification, all practices should be bound by principles of dignity and compassion, which can be applied in any jurisdiction. Successful victim notification protocols are developed using several common elements (see Figure 3.2). Including both community-based and system-based advocates results in significant positive changes, such as victims obtaining information and referrals as well as feeling heard and respected.

Figure 3.2. Process to Develop a Victim-Centered Notification Protocol[183] [184]
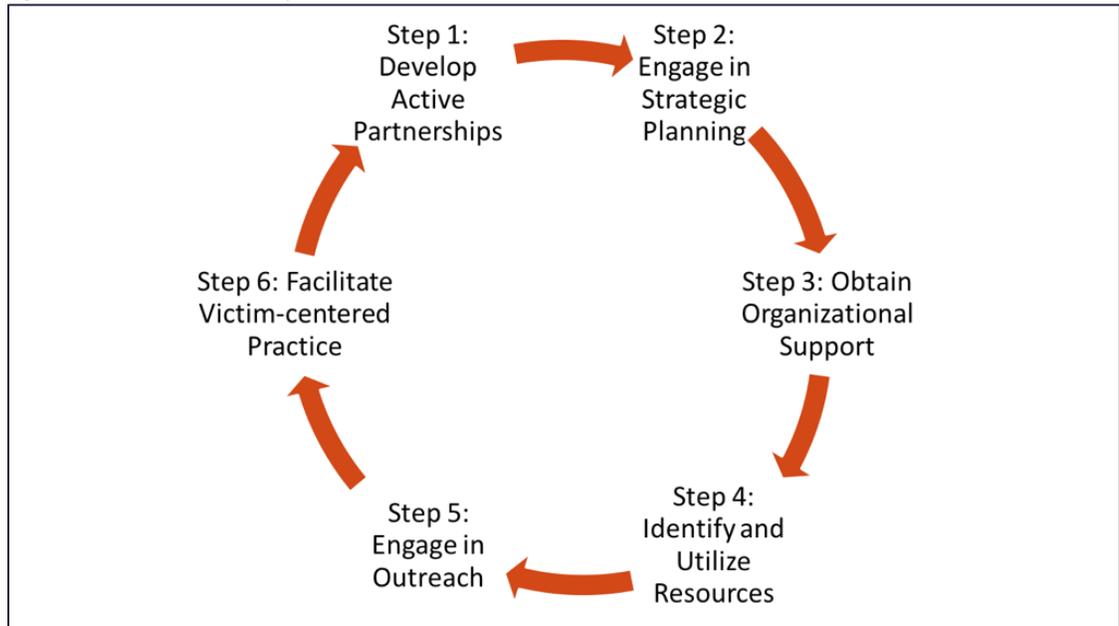
Note: The steps in this process may not go in this specific order.

Community Example: Sparking Change with Multidisciplinary Work in Houston

In Houston, a subgroup that worked on the notification protocol was surveyed, and six themes emerged. They:

- Planned strategically.
- Built organizational support among all participating agencies.
- Engaged in active partnerships with each other.
- Obtained resources for personnel and services.
- Conducted outreach to the community and to providers.
- Developed and embodied a sensitive and ethical approach based on their knowledge of victim-centered and trauma-informed practices.

Development and implementation of victim-centered, trauma-informed notification protocols can be a catalyst for cultural change within communities. Providing resources to victims and investigators can also benefit prosecutions. Refer to Tables 3.1 and 3.2 for examples of how to use procedural justice theory and trauma-informed care in designing notification protocols.

Table 3.1. Procedural Justice in Practice

Procedural Justice Concept	Definition	Examples in Notification
Representation and Voice	Victim is heard, has opportunity to speak and represent self.	Victim is able to express their frustration with case, that the SAK was not tested until now.
Accuracy	Decisions about case are made based on accurate information.	Professional creates a positive environment for victim and obtains helpful case information.
Neutrality	Decisions are made based on consistent rule application.	Professional contacts victim, despite prior documentation of victim's unwillingness to cooperate.
Respect and Dignity	Victim is treated respectfully and with dignity.	Professional says to victim, "Your case is important," and listens to victim's response.
Fair Treatment	Victim's rights are acknowledged, treatment is polite and courteous.	Professional discusses victim's rights and responds patiently to questions.

Table 3.2. Trauma-Informed Care in Practice

Trauma-Informed Care Elements[185]	NoVA Application
Safety	Prioritize physical and mental safety: How will notification affect victims' mental health? Is it likely that the victim is currently living with the offender?
Trustworthiness and Transparency	Provide accurate, timely information whenever possible, provided the victim has requested this information.
Peer Support	Create a peer support group for victims in cold cases to come together and be facilitated by victim advocates.
Collaboration and Mutuality	Establish a diverse and equitable multidisciplinary group to develop and implement the victim notification protocol (discussed further in Step 3 of this guide).
Empowerment, Voice, and Choice	Honor victims' decisions about engagement with the criminal justice system, and allow victims to make choices whenever possible (even if they are choices you don't agree with). Provide the option for victims to "opt-in" to receiving further updates on their case. Meet at the location of the victim's choice.
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	Train all members of the victim notification team on the dynamics of gender-based violence and on historical oppression and disenfranchisement of various groups. Involve community leaders from diverse groups in the system when creating the protocol.

Victim Notification Methods

Your group has the option of using several methods of contact when attempting to notify victims. Although the needs of individual victims must be taken into account when deciding which method to attempt, each has general advantages and drawbacks as summarized in Table 3.3 and described further on the subsequent pages.

Table 3.3. Strengths and Challenges of Victim Notification Methods[186]

Contact Method	Opportunities	Challenges	Best Uses
In-person	- Immediate crisis intervention and feedback - More personal approach can help build trust - Confidentiality – can identify who is around the victim at the time of notification	- Can pose a threat to privacy (may not be able to control who is around at the time of notification) - May cause painful memories of negative experiences with law enforcement - Could result in surprise or shock	Initial or follow up contact
Phone	- Greater confidentiality - Gives victims more control over the initial interaction	- Must be careful regarding voicemail and who answers the phone - Can feel impersonal - Less opportunity for crisis intervention - Phone numbers can frequently change or become disconnected	Initial contact and subsequent follow up contact based on victim's preferred method of being contacted
Mail	- Some victims may be more likely to receive mail than email - Certified mail can provide greater confidentiality - Victim can open the piece of mail on their own time	- Relocated victims may not receive notification - Victims may not regularly read mail - Very little confidentiality as letters may be intercepted - May come off as impersonal - Provides no opportunity for crisis intervention	Last resort after unsuccessful attempts have been made in-person and by phone

Busch-Armendariz, N., Sulley, C., Hoefer, S., Backes, B., Dempster, M., & Thompson, J. (2019). Notification for victims of sexual assault (NoVA): A guide for communities with untested sexual assault kits. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin. © 2019 Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault. All rights reserved.

Contact Method	Opportunities	Challenges	Best Uses
Email	- May be the primary form of communication for some victims - Can reach victims who have relocated - Can include a read receipt to ensure victim has opened it	- Email can be misdirected as spam or overlooked - Can feel highly impersonal - Provides no opportunity for crisis intervention - No way to guarantee that the victim is the one who receives the email	Ongoing notification and information following initial contact
Opt-in Notification	- Notify community members about efforts being undertaken - Allow victims to exercise choice and control	Must be able to reach a large number of victims and provide clear instructions for receiving information	Websites, call centers, and PSAs by local media to alert wide number of victims that information may be available

Adapted with permission from: National Center for Victims of Crime. (2011). *Cold case victim notification: Sample policy*. Retrieved from http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/default-source/dna-resource-center-documents/cold-case-victim-notification-policy.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Community Example: Victim-Centered Response in Detroit

> A victim-centered response during notification is critical, in part because these respectful and supportive experiences can result in increased victim cooperation, satisfaction, and participation. In Detroit, investigators, "overwhelmingly described their [notification] experiences as positive and successful, feeling that they had helped start the process of bringing justice for the victim" when notifying victims in cold cases.[187]

Notification In Person

In-person notification allows for immediate discussion around victims' questions and for crisis intervention, if necessary. It can also provide a more personal approach that can help in building trust between practitioners and victims.[188]

However, in-person notification can also threaten victims' privacy if family, friends, or others are nearby when the notification team attempts contact.[189] Additionally, victims may have had negative experiences with law enforcement at the time of the initial assault and

report. In a qualitative study in Houston, researchers found that five of seven victim participants reported being treated poorly by law enforcement and experiencing little or no follow up regarding their original case.[190] The unexpected arrival of law enforcement personnel could trigger painful memories, surprise, and shock for these victims. Having a victim advocate present during in-person notifications can help to alleviate some of these concerns.[191]

Community Example: In-Person Notification in Detroit

> The Detroit working group used in-person notification for some initial contacts (others were done by phone), and for all follow-up contacts. Goals for in-person follow-up included offering support and following the victim's lead in terms of next steps, providing information, reviewing options, and connections to resources and services.[192]

Notification by Phone

Phone call notification does not pose the same threat to confidentiality that in-person notification does. However, your working group should make careful decisions about whether to leave voicemail messages, and what information to include in any messages.[193] Phone notification also gives victims more control over the initial interaction by allowing them the chance to call back at a more convenient time and make their own decisions about if, when, and where to meet in person for further information.[194]

Unfortunately, notification by phone can feel impersonal, and does not provide the same opportunities for crisis intervention, support, and information sharing that in-person notification does. Finding current phone numbers for victims can prove difficult as well.[195]

Community Example: Phone Calls in Detroit

> In Detroit, phone calls were used in attempting to establish initial contact with victims; follow up could then potentially be in person. The Detroit team developed the following guidelines for phone notification: be brief and supportive, provide the update, make an apology, and offer the victim an opportunity for a follow up meeting.[196]

Notification by Mail

Some victims may be more likely to notice notification by mail than notification by email.[197] Of course, this might not be true for all victims depending on their usual communication patterns. For example, one victim in Houston stated that, had she received a notification letter, she would have "thrown it away or thought it was a parking ticket."[198] Victims who relocate frequently might be difficult to contact via mail. Also, traditional mail offers very little confidentiality; letters can easily be intercepted or read by new residents or other people with access to them. Consequently, notification by mail should only be considered in

cases where initial in-person and phone attempts to contact victims have been unsuccessful.[199] If your group has to conduct notification by mail, certified mail can help alleviate some confidentiality concerns.[200]

Notification by Email

Email may be the primary form of communication a victim uses and may more easily reach victims who have relocated than traditional mail. However, spam filters can misdirect emails or victims may overlook them, so emails used for notification should include a request for read receipt.[201] Emails can also feel highly impersonal, and offer no opportunity to provide support or crisis intervention to the victim. For these reasons, working groups should avoid email for initial contact and use email primarily for ongoing contact, if at all.[202][203]

Opt-In Notification

In addition to the notification techniques described above, your working group may consider "opt-in" options, which allow victims who are interested in receiving updates about their case to reach out to law enforcement or other practitioners. Opt-in techniques include providing information on websites that victims can access, creating call centers, and spreading public service announcements through local media.[204] For these campaigns to work, they must reach a large number of community members and provide clear instructions for interested victims.

Considerations for Opt-In Notification

Opt-in notification requires purposeful communication and follow up with victims. The following practices are recommended.

- Validate the victim's identity.
- Do not provide any case information on first contact.
- Ask for a follow-up contact number and develop a simple questionnaire to guide the victim through notification.
- Offer to do research on their case and follow back up.
- Always do an in-person meeting to give out case specifics and use a neutral and safe location to meet the victim (e.g., a women's advocacy center), or ask for preference and choice in meeting spots.
- If no ongoing case or case-specific information is available, it is appropriate to call back with simple information about the status of the case (e.g., DA refused to prosecute). Arrange an in-person meeting for any further case details.
- Be aware of the limitations and opportunities related to each victim's case based on the statute of limitations. Consider whether a case is still within the statute of limitations when deciding if and when to test a SAK; comparisons of CODIS hit rates by age of kit are also warranted.
- Practitioners should be clear not to provide false hope or promises. Provide clear expectations, for example, "I will need to do research and I will call back in two weeks." Follow through is extremely important, even with bad news.

Noteworthy Lessons in Victim Notification: Detroit[205]

Findings from the Detroit SAK report indicate it may be possible to locate most victims relatively easily, even when significant time has passed between the assault and notification. Despite the average length of time between assault and notification being nine years, the Detroit team was able to locate 95% (31 of 33) of victims with complete data. The majority of victims (65%, 20 victims) in this study were located with relatively low effort (defined as a database search, 0-4 phone calls, and/or 0-1 in person visits to a single address). On average, 3 contact attempts were required to locate victims. In general, victims' desire to participate in the prosecution of cases was similar among all victims contacted. Victims who were harder to locate were not less likely to want to participate, suggesting that ease of locating the victim should not be a criteria for notification decisions.

The Detroit team noted that the coordination and logistics of their protocol were sometimes challenging. It was difficult to line up the schedules of investigators, advocates, and victims to meet together in person.

Detroit victim advocates described how investigators might improve their behavior during notification and better understand the dynamics at play. While advocates indicated that investigators had done an "excellent" job overall, they also identified some problematic behaviors such as moving through questions too quickly, telling the victim to "calm down," and trying to touch victims in order to comfort them. Advocates identified promising strategies such as how to establish connections with victims during the initial contact and how to continue to develop rapport during future contacts. Advocates also recommended training for law enforcement on the dynamics of intimate partner violence to help build understanding of sexual assault victims who may be romantically involved with or living with perpetrators.[206] Research shows that, when law enforcement are knowledgeable about the needs of victim populations such as domestic violence victims, further re-traumatization is reduced.[207]

Victims' Preferences for Notification in Houston

The Houston project found that victims preferred a team approach to notification that included an investigator and a victim advocate. The presence of an advocate often increased victims' willingness to re-engage, even if their original report of the sexual assault had resulted in an initial negative experience with the criminal justice system. Overwhelmingly, survivors indicated that their preferred method of notification was in-person meetings. If in-person notification was not possible, phone contact was preferred over written communication, but victims expressed concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and the impersonal nature of both of these methods. [208]

Best practices identified in SAK Action Research Projects in both Detroit and Houston are as follows:[209] [210] [211]

- Develop a protocol using a multidisciplinary team.
- Give all victims the opportunity to decide whether to be notified (through opt-in notification options), rather than notification occurring at the discretion of external stakeholders such as law enforcement.
- Empower victims by offering choice and control.
- Provide resources and support during and after notification, and communicate with working group partners to have a list of available service options ready when notification begins.

- Information about their case and the criminal justice process is crucial to the victim's healing process. It can be validating for victims and helpful for victim engagement moving forward.
- Victim advocates benefit from observing or participating in positive victim notification experiences.
- Personnel conducting notification should not press victims for immediate decisions regarding prosecution or participating in interviews, and should instead give survivors time to process the information.
- Jurisdictions should commit to locating as many survivors as possible, which may involve "hitting the streets," and multiple attempts at contact (e.g., 12+ phone calls; 6+ in-person visits).
- Meet with victims on their own terms (e.g., place and time), in person, and travel in unmarked vehicles with civilian attire to avoid potential breaches of confidentiality.

Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups

Your notification protocol should thoughtfully consider notification for victims who may be vulnerable or marginalized in the community. Although there are not specific legal parameters for notifying members of marginalized communities, your team should be mindful of:

- Any physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities the victim may have.
- The victim's gender identity and sexual orientation.
- The victim's racial and ethnic identities.
- The victim's age (people who are young or elderly may both be subject to harmful biases).
- Socioeconomic factors, such as income.
- Any involvement with sex work the victim may have.

Your working group should consider historical and ongoing oppression, and the ways in which these oppressions occur in the criminal justice system and contribute to mistreatment of victims. Part of assessing your community context is sensitivity to the unique environments that led to untested SAKs, including taking a close look at factors that may contribute to unequal treatment and marginalization by the criminal justice system. In creating your protocol, aim to avoid further marginalization or alienation of certain groups and individuals from services.

At the individual level, victims' recovery may be affected by numerous demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, age, and employment or marital status; many of these factors, like race/ethnicity, can be examined at both individual and macro levels.[212] For more discussion, see Step 2 personal readiness considerations and tools.

Your working group should acknowledge societal bias toward victims from underrepresented groups and its impact on the agencies, individuals, and systems with which they interact. Your group can combat biases by identifying them and developing targeted strategies to avoid instances where biases could easily affect decision-making. For example, gender biases may cause team members and other professionals to disbelieve victims, misclassify or downplay reports, or inappropriately question victims. For more information on preventing gender biases in response to sexual assault, see the DOJ's report, "Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence."[213]

Victims of Intimate Partner Sexual Assault

When working with sexual assault victims, it is important to understand the case history, including the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. Sexual violence often co-occurs with intimate partner violence, causing more concern for victim safety.[214] [215] While safety of the victim is always an important consideration in victim notification, additional precautions may be necessary for victims of intimate partner sexual assault.

Here are some things to consider when planning to engage with a victim whose perpetrator is a current or former intimate partner:

- Before any type of notification (mail, phone, in-person), determine the location of the perpetrator. If the perpetrator is cohabitating with the victim, then use an alternative notification strategy (generic letter or call, alternate contact).
- Any notifications by mail or phone should be worded generically without reference to the crime, perpetrator, or victim status.
- Ask the victim for (or provide the victims with) safe meeting locations.
- Establish alternate contacts for the victim, such as a friend or family member you can contact with messages or information.
- Create a system to flag cases of sexual violence that have ongoing intimate partner violence so that appropriate measures can be taken to enhance victim safety.
- Consider working with your local domestic violence agency to collaboratively engage with victims of intimate partner sexual assault.

Disclosure of Subsequent Victimization During Notification

Women who experience sexual violence are at increased risk for re-victimization, which is the experience of subsequent sexual assault victimizations.[216] [217] When notifying victims about their SAK being tested, victims may disclose a subsequent assault or incident that was previously unreported. If this happens, the notification team should explain that the victim has the right to report any victimization, including subsequent victimization that occurred after first engaging with the criminal justice system. This is one of many victim rights; you can build your notification protocol to include your state's code on crime victims' rights. These may include the initial right to receive a sexual assault exam, the right to information about the case as it proceeds, and the right to provide a victim impact statement, among

others. These practices are important for both older cases with untested SAKs and current reports of sexual assault. For more information, see the sexual assault Survivors' Bill of Rights.[218] Available at: https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/5578/text

Notification in Special Circumstances
SAK Testing and Non-Report Kits

Recent recommendations from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) support honoring victims' wishes about testing non-reported sexual assault kits (NR-SAKs), also known as "non-investigative" kits. NR-SAKs are collected from adult victims who chose not to report the sexual assault to law enforcement and wish to remain anonymous. [219] [220] Historically, local law enforcement authorities tested SAKs at their discretion.[221] OVW's position is supported by the U.S. military, national victims' advocate organizations, and some state legislatures. Specifically, OVW cautions that, "Testing non-investigative kits without victim consent can undermine victims' rights, weaken community trust of law enforcement, and constitute an imprudent use of finite resources."[222]

While NIJ has funded research projects on untested SAKs in both Houston and Detroit, NR-SAKs were not part of that research. In Detroit, NR-SAKs were precluded from the research. In Houston, NR-SAKs were not a part of the research due to legal mandates that required testing only active investigations where a report had been taken. Although some states have mandated testing of SAKs regardless of the status of the investigation, most legislation does not specifically address the issue of submitting kits from victims who chose not to report.[223] Only a few states (Florida and Michigan) currently have policies formally prohibiting testing such kits.[224]

This guidance recognizes that the criminal justice system may want more information from SAKs for public safety purposes, but emphasizes developing alternative reporting options for victims rather than testing unsubmitted SAKs without victims' consent. Alternative options for reporting honor victims' choice and provide options for the report to be converted to a standard/formal report to law enforcement later.[225] Submitting SAKs without victim consent weakens victims' rights, adds barriers to reporting for victims, damages community trust in the criminal justice system, and wastes limited resources available to respond to other victims' needs. Alternative reporting can include anonymous reporting, third party reporting (e.g., through a friend or family member), or non-investigative reporting. Often anonymous reporting, third party reporting, and non-investigative reporting are terms used interchangeably.[226]

Victim confidentiality is paramount, and some victims choose not to make a report. We must respect this decision. In Texas, one study of a state law that allowed victims to receive a sexual assault medical forensic exam without making report to law enforcement, found that the non-report program:

- Supports victims and their decision-making process by allowing them time to make an informed decision about engaging in the criminal justice system.
- Improves criminal justice responses if the victim later decides to report by ensuring the collection and safe storage of evidence.
- Reduces the risk of secondary traumatization by allowing the victim time to process and heal before repeating the details of the incident in a report.
- Supports the development of creative, alternative, and anonymous reporting strategies, such as allowing the victim to speak to an officer off the record or allowing an the officer to speak to a victim's friend who has knowledge of the incident.[227]

Considerations for When to Notify Victims

Each jurisdiction will be at a different starting point when they come together to develop a notification guide. Some may have yet to inventory untested evidence while others may have already begun testing sexual assault evidence.

Using *Figure 3.3. Victim Notification Decision Flowchart,* jurisdictions should develop a framework for when notification should occur. Ideally, victim notification should occur prior to any evidence testing, but this may not always be possible for a variety of reasons. Below is a flowchart to consider as notification protocols are developed.

Figure 3.3: Victim Notification Decision Flowchart[228]
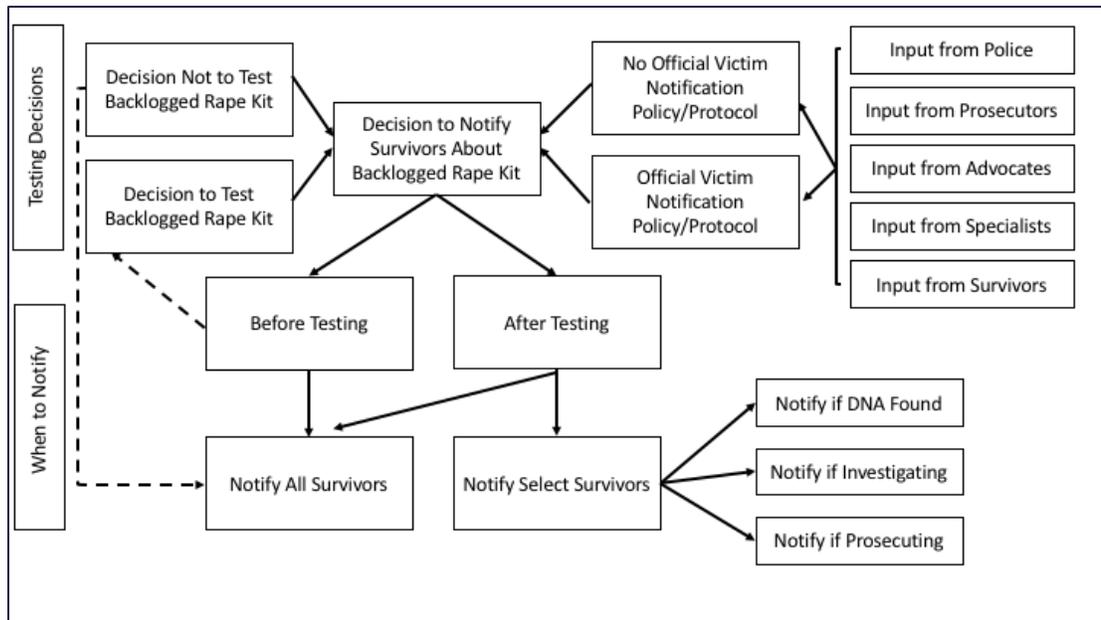
Testing Decisions

When clearing inventories of untested SAKs, different jurisdictions will have different testing policies, and not all SAKs will be tested in some states. This may be due to statutes of limitations running out, evidence retention policies, or a lack of resources. Even if the decision is made that a SAK will not be tested, it is still important to notify the survivor of the testing decision and why the SAK was not tested in order to the close the loop on the case. This protocol should be reflected in the official notification process.

Notifying After Testing Occurred

When notifying survivors that their SAKs were tested retroactively, it is important to consider that the survivor may have a strong reaction, and professionals should anticipate resulting challenges and backlash. Notification protocols should be centered around the provided victim-centered frameworks in order to appropriately respond to survivors' needs. Jurisdictions will need to determine whether to notify survivors only if DNA evidence is found or to notify them regardless of the results of the testing, and this protocol should be reflected in the official notification process. As much as possible, jurisdictions should notify survivors about the testing status of their SAK in real time, with regular and consistent updates.

Notifying Before Testing Occurs

When testing previously untested SAKs, survivors should ideally be notified before testing occurs and provided clear information about the testing process. This includes the various outcomes that may occur, such as no DNA evidence or no CODIS hits or a DNA match, and their subsequent options in the criminal justice process. Survivors should be notified at all

steps of the process regardless of whether their case will move forward as a result. If possible, survivors should be able to determine the manner in which notification occurs. Regular notification can positively contribute to survivor well-being and process efficacy.

The Role of Apology

Authentic apology about inadequate sexual assault response conveys genuine compassion, care, and commitment to the public and the victims. Your community partners can come together to make a statement and conduct outreach to rectify issues around SAKs. It is helpful, and potentially healing, for the public to witness an authentic relationship and connection between law enforcement and advocacy, for example. You may consider bringing in a consultant or expert to assist with the development of an apology and/or affirmation of your commitment to the issue of sexual violence.

Authentic apology for systemic failures to test SAKs can be an opportunity for reparation in your community. However, an apology may also have legal implications related to admission of wrongdoing.[229] You will want to ensure that public apologies or admissions of wrongdoing are vetted and approved, as required, by your agency and jurisdiction.

Any apology conducted in the context of victim notification should be authentic and full. To be authentic, the apology should acknowledge the harm done by the system to the victim, admit fault on behalf of the system, and express genuine remorse.[230] The Joyful Heart Foundation found that survivors valued practitioners who offered an apology early in the process of notification. Victims viewed practitioners' apologizing and taking responsibility for the delay in testing as an important component of establishing trust.[231]

The Role of Advocacy

As previously mentioned, victim advocates are practitioners involved in notification who are primarily focused on the needs of the victim, and who can provide support, information, and resources.[232]

Victim advocates can be employed in various ways, and this affects their role and the confidentiality rules they must follow.[233] Community-based advocates work in a community-based agency, such as a non-profit sexual assault crisis center. Within the criminal justice system, usually law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, or both employ system-based advocates (also known as justice advocates). Victim advocates who are involved in notification are typically system-based advocates, but may be community-based advocates depending on the resources available in each jurisdiction.

Confidentiality and Victim Advocates

It is important that victims and practitioners are aware of the different rules governing confidentiality and privileged communication in the victim-advocate relationship. Although laws vary by state, victims usually have little to no confidentiality with system-based advocates, but may have higher levels of confidentiality with community-based advocates.[234]

In one 2015 study, all victims interviewed reported that they appreciated the support of the justice advocate. One victim stated that the advocate "listened, gave [her] space to cry, let [her] open up, and helped [her] express [her]self."[235] Advocates can provide invaluable support for both victims and law enforcement, and should be present during notification whenever possible.

Tools for Practice: Moving Forward - Making a Plan to Make Change

There are several tools that can guide you and your team towards planning for and creating change in your community. See two examples below.

Victim Notification Retreat Planning Guide

It is strongly encouraged that your team utilize the Detroit project's retreat planning guide. In that project, the team scheduled an intensive work session to develop its victim notification protocol. The retreat planning guide serves as a valuable tool to prepare the multidisciplinary team for such a session. To obtain a copy of the Victim Notification Retreat Planning Guide in the Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Report (Appendix C1, p. 450), visit: https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248680.pdf

The guide lays out each step for the retreat, including:

1. Pre-retreat discussions
2. Preparing discussion topics
3. Retreat ground rules
4. Other helpful tips for retreat planning
5. Key questions to discuss at the retreat
6. Protecting confidentiality

Questions to Ask Yourself When Working with Juvenile Victims

When planning a notification protocol and subsequent work with juvenile victims, it may be helpful to ask yourself these questions. They are designed to help you reflect on how you can respect juvenile victims' needs and choices. Sometimes there may be a good reason for the answer to be "no," such as victim circumstances, age, cognitive development, or legal requirements.

- Would I treat an adult this way?
- Would I talk to an adult in this tone of voice?
- Would I have this expectation for an adult?
- Would I make this decision for an adult?
- Would I limit an adult's behavior in this way?
- Would I listen to a report of sexual assault from an adult in this same way?

Adapted with permission from: Bell, J. (2009). *Understanding adultism: A key to developing positive youth-adult relationships.* Free Child Project. Retrieved from:

http://www.nuatc.org/articles/pdf/understanding adultism.pdf

STEP 5: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

What You Will Learn

- The basic concepts, types, and importance of evaluation
- How to plan and implement evaluation within your community
- The benefits of evaluation for your community and other communities

This step introduces evaluation and assessment concepts. There are many different types of evaluation, with varying degrees of formality. Evaluations can be useful in measuring aspects of a program or service. Although the idea of an "evaluation" can feel formal or daunting, it is simply a process of reviewing the work that has been done and identifying successes, opportunities for improvement, and lessons learned. This section will introduce several types of evaluation, including traditional approaches and innovative and emerging methods such as action research and developmental evaluation. Jurisdictions must determine what is feasible given their resources. In some cases, grants may require the involvement of external evaluators or researchers. The information in this step is not exhaustive. It is written for readers who are seeking a basic introduction to evaluation and assessment and is not intended to provide sophisticated guidance for program evaluators or researchers.

NoVA Step 5: Evaluating Your Protocol

The final component of the victim notification model is evaluation or assessment. Once communities have implemented their new protocol, evaluation allows them to identify what has gone well and what still needs to be addressed or what can be improved. Research indicates that SARTs which engage in formal evaluation of their collaborative work may have higher victim engagement in the criminal justice system than SARTs that do not.[236] While this guide presents assessment as the final step, it is really part of a feedback loop for continuous quality improvement. It is vital that working groups utilize the findings of their assessments on an ongoing basis to inform and improve notification and sexual assault response efforts. Additionally, communities can add to the communal body of knowledge on best practices in victim notification by sharing their processes, successes, and challenges with other jurisdictions.

Figure 3.4. NoVA Change Process Step 5: Assessment
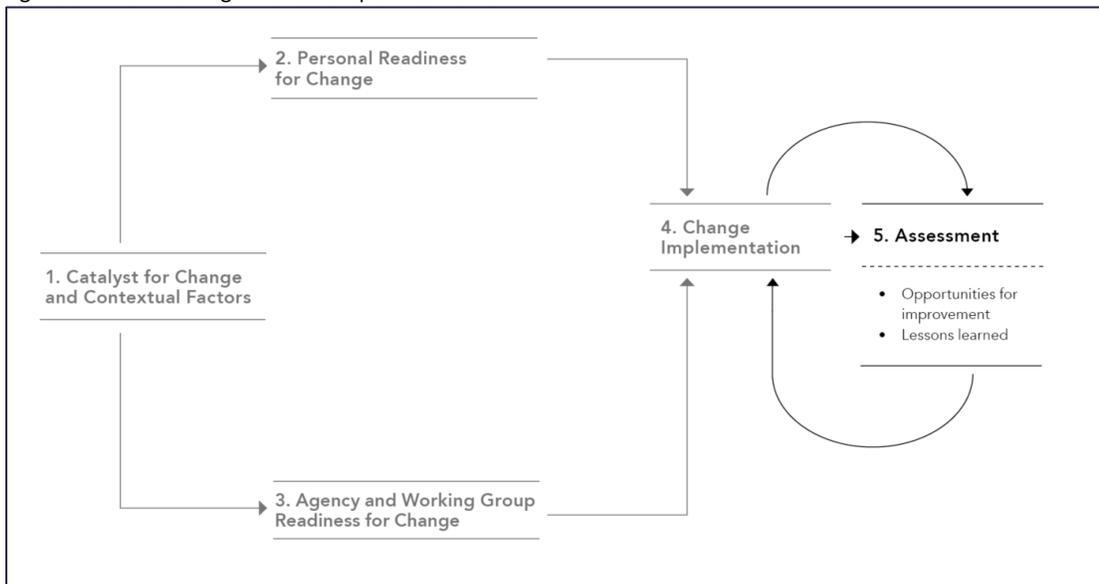
Community Example: NoVA in Memphis: Evaluation [237]

Memphis identified the following elements that were working well through informal assessment:

- Training, which benefits both old and current cases
- Their message to victims that they matter and their case matters was important
- Working regularly with the media
- Working with the victim to protect the victim's privacy, specifically in the media
- Multidisciplinary case review meetings
- Quarterly "lunch-and-learns" for feedback from investigators and advocates

What You Need to Know

Needs Assessment – What Do We Know at the Start?

Often, it is helpful to begin a project with a needs assessment.[238] A needs assessment explores the extent of a problem, such as the number of untested SAKs in a jurisdiction or the relationship between community members and the various systems. An assessment can help prioritize needs, and identify available resources and interventions to address those needs. Lastly, needs assessments identify potential barriers that may prevent victims from receiving successful notification.[239]

Evaluation Tool: Logic Models – What Are We Going to Do to Achieve Our Goal and How?

It is useful to create a logic model before a project or program begins so that all team members have a shared understanding.[240] Logic models are a useful way to outline the "flow" of your project or program.[241] Logic models help outline the program's activities, outputs, and outcomes. More simply, logic models help establish your program's intended activities and goals. Additionally, logic models are included here because they can be useful tools to come back to in assessing whether an intervention has been applied faithfully, and whether it met its stated outcomes.242 There are many ways to create and format a logic mode;[243] one example is on the next page. For more information about logic models, see the University of Kansas Center for Community Health's Community Tool Box at: https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main

Table 3.4. Logic Models[244]

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
What you are putting in to the project, including: • Resources • Funding • Staff • Meeting time • Space • Expertise	What will happen during the implementation of this project, such as: • Monthly meetings • Testing SAKs • Developing a victim notification protocol • Notifying victims	What will be the tangible, measurable results of this project? • A victim notification protocol • # victims notified • # SAKs tested • # monthly meetings	What specific, measurable things will have happened during this project? • Victims will be given information about their cases. • Victims will be given the choice to receive further information.	What will happen because of this project? • The NoVA protocol will minimize risks of secondary trauma for victims. • The NoVA protocol will increase victims' choice and control in the process.

Once a logic model has been developed for a program, it is much easier to design an evaluation plan based on the stated program activities, outputs, and outcomes. By conducting an evaluation, your team can determine whether the stated actions in the logic model occurred as planned.

Process Evaluation – Did We Adhere to Our Process?

Process evaluations are designed to assess how a program (in this case the victim notification protocol) functions, rather than the final results, or outcomes achieved.[245] Looking at the logic model, a process evaluation[246] is mainly concerned with the Activities and the Outputs columns, and determining whether or not these happened as stated.[247] Process evaluations have three primary goals:

1. Program description – to provide information about what happens in the program, what its goals are, target population to be served, and how many people are being served

2. Program monitoring – to offer insight into the day-to-day functioning of the program and if the protocol is happening exactly as envisioned
3. Quality assurance – to define what quality is for this program, measure how well the program achieves quality, and offer feedback and a chance for improvement[248]

Typical process evaluation activities can include:

- Observation and monitoring
- Interviews with staff, partners, and clients
- Focus groups
- Surveys

If a process evaluation makes it clear that an intervention is not being implemented as planned, or that people involved with the intervention are not on the same page about the activities they are supposed to complete, it is important to stop and address these "fidelity" concerns first before trying to evaluate the initiative as a whole to see how effective it was.[249] This is another opportunity for a feedback loop to ensure continuous improvement.

Outcome Evaluation – Did We Achieve Our Goal?

Outcome evaluation is interested in the Outcomes section of the logic model, and whether the program met its stated goals (outcomes and sometimes the outputs and impacts). Outcomes must be specific and measurable to be assessed.[250] For examples of specific outcomes, see the section on planning your own evaluation below. It can be very difficult to definitively prove whether an intervention caused a specific outcome.[251] This is because there are many other factors that could have caused a change, such as natural change over time, external developments or events, and repeated testing effects. However, there are several types of evaluation designs that can help control for some of these outside factors, and give you a clearer sense of whether or not you can reasonably assume that your protocol had an effect.[252]

Planning Your Own Evaluation

1) Goal Setting and Evaluation Questions

Before beginning evaluation, consider what you want to know about your program and how you will use the resulting information.[253] It is also important to note that anyone undertaking an evaluation should be open to unexpected or surprising findings that arise in the course of data collection and analysis. Thinking about the following questions or discussing them as a group will help you start the evaluation process.

- What are the program goals and objectives?
- Who are the target clients?
- How would you know the program worked?[254]
- What is the timeframe for the program and the evaluation?

These questions will help you develop evaluation questions and the measurable "outcome indicators" that will answer those questions. Before you can measure whether or not you are meeting your goals, it is important to define those goals clearly, as well as benchmarks or indicators that can be measured on the way to reaching your intended outcomes. For example, one of your goals may be to reach a certain number of victims. Another may be to minimize re-traumatizing aspects of notification and to provide support to victims. If you are conducting a process evaluation, questions might include:

- How many clients are we serving annually?
- What services are our clients receiving?
- What does our client population look like, and are we reaching our intended population? Are there any potentially "invisible" populations we haven't reached?

Indicators for these questions might include routine data collected by your agency or SART about the number and demographics of clients served. For an outcome evaluation, questions might include:

- Is our program improving judicial outcomes for our clients?
- Are our clients satisfied with our services?
- Does participation in our program improve clients' mental health outcomes?

Indicators for these questions might include: court records regarding arrests, prosecutions, and sentencing; client ratings of satisfaction with services; and client symptoms of PTSD and depression.

2) Identify Sources of Data

Your evaluation or assessment data can come from several different sources. Generally, your data sources should provide data that will help you evaluate whether or not you are meeting your goals.[255] If one of your goals is to improve victims' experiences with and perceptions of law enforcement, then it will be important to include the voices of victims when evaluating whether or not you have reached that goal. If your goals include furthering working relationships among professionals in the community, then observation or interviews with professionals will be important to include. In general, there are five broad sources of data:

1. Interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Surveys
4. Observation
5. Secondary data analysis[256] [257]

Table 3.5. Data Sources and Appropriate Measurement Instruments[258]

Data Source	Measurement Instrument
Interviews	Interview protocol – structured, semi-structured, or unstructured
Focus Groups	Focus group protocol – structured, semi-structured, or unstructured
Surveys	Pre-existing survey tool – from research reports or other jurisdictions
	Local or specialized survey tool (see shadowbox on page 97)
Observation	Observation report tool
Secondary Data Analysis	Existing forms, such as assessment forms, intake forms, investigator notes, and reports

Interviews are one-on-one meetings with professionals, victims, or other stakeholders and are typically useful for getting in-depth, qualitative information from a small number of key informants.[259] [260] Interviews can be structured, (using a script of questions), semi-structured, (include some questions, but can progress naturally), or unstructured (open-ended and free form).

Focus groups are much like interviews, but occur with groups of people, generally victims, practitioners, or other community members.[261] Although focus groups generally do not allow for as much in-depth conversation with each participant as interviews, the group dynamic can allow participants to build upon each other's ideas and provide different information. Focus groups usually include one or two facilitators, and involve structured group discussion.[262]

Surveys come in many forms, but broadly, a survey is a list of questions administered by phone, mail, email, or in person in a written or electronic form (on a tablet, for example). Surveys can provide a variety of information, and can be sent to community members, clients, and professionals. Surveys can include both qualitative and quantitative questions, although generally those answering the survey will not want to take the time to write out answers to in-depth qualitative questions.[263] It is important to remember that surveys can bring response bias – meaning that sometimes, people who participate in surveys can differ in important ways from people who do not. For example, sometimes only people who have strong feelings about the program will decide to take a survey and that can bias the results. Client satisfaction surveys are one specific type of survey for people receiving services, discussed more in the Victim Satisfaction Surveys below.

Observation occurs when researchers, or others tasked with collecting data by attending meetings or activities, like victim notifications, to watch and record notes. Observations can

provide useful information about processes and collaborative dynamics, and can also help determine if all activities are being undertaken as planned (intervention fidelity).

Secondary data analysis refers to reviewing existing data, such as organizational and community records, incident numbers, and case flow data. This can help you get a picture of how a program has affected a population or organization. In the case of victim notification, analyzing investigators' case notes can provide a sense of organizational culture and the factors informing individual case decisions.

Victim Satisfaction Surveys

Victim satisfaction surveys explore clients' feedback about services they have received. While satisfaction surveys can provide useful information about client perceptions of both strengths and gaps in services, they should not be used as the only indicator of success for a program as clients generally report very high levels of satisfaction even when barriers or gaps may be present.[264]

Here are recommendations for designing client satisfaction surveys that are as objective as possible:[265]

- Use a scale with good reliability and a proven track record.
- Administer the same survey instrument multiple times to establish a baseline and see change in satisfaction over time.
- Include open-ended questions where participants may express concerns not covered in the survey questions.

For more information and examples of victim satisfaction surveys, see End Violence Against Women International's information on best practices for evaluation[266] (available at http://www.evawintl.org/PAGEID10/Best-Practices/Resources/Evaluation) and the Office for Victims of Crime's evaluation tools for SARTs (available at https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/sartkit/tools/eval-tools.html).[267]

3) Identify Measurement Instruments

After identifying sources of data about your project, you will need to find or develop measurement tools that will facilitate data collection from those sources. For example, if you are planning to interview staff and/or victims about their experiences, you will need to develop an interview protocol that outlines the questions or topics to be covered in the interview.

If you want to collect data using a survey, it is a good idea to check existing literature, including reports from other jurisdictions, for pre-existing survey tools.[268]

Developing Local or Specialized Survey Tools[269]

> Using an existing survey tool has several advantages, such as convenience, saving time, and in some cases, prior evidence demonstrating the tool's usefulness. However, using an existing survey tool may not always be feasible. When one does not exist that matches your jurisdiction's intended outcome, it can be appropriate or necessary to develop your own survey tools. Some ground rules for developing a new survey tool:
>
> - The tool should address your research question(s).
> - Questions should be either "open-ended" or "closed-ended," depending on the research questions and type of information evaluators want to gather. "Closed ended" responses have pre-selected options (like a multiple choice question), while open-ended responses do not. If using a closed-ended survey, including one or two open-ended questions too will allow participants to provide useful information that can direct the evaluation in new ways.
> - Survey items should be clear and concise.
> - Survey items should use simple, easy-to-understand language appropriate for the population who will be responding to the survey. If participants may be more comfortable in a language other than English, the survey instrument should be translated.
> - Surveys should use "operationalized" terms, meaning that words are clearly defined and described with specific examples to make sure surveys capturing the intended information.
> - Surveys should be piloted with the intended audience and revisions made to improve the tool based on feedback.

4) Collect Data

Once sources of data have been identified and measurement instruments have been created or located, it is appropriate to begin collecting data. For interviews, focus groups, and surveys, it will generally be necessary to recruit participants. The process for recruiting community members and victims may look different than the process for recruiting practitioners to provide information.

There are a variety of methods available for recruiting participants. There are also many ethical considerations involved with collecting data from vulnerable populations, especially when victims are receiving services from a participating agency. You will want to ensure that individuals are not coerced to participate, consider the potential for trauma or distress, and ensure that confidentiality is maintained.[270] Evaluators who are affiliated with a university must obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting research with human subjects; evaluators based in the community may also seek guidance

from the IRB of a local institution, although they are not be required to seek IRB approval if the evaluation is being conducted for the purposes of improving service delivery because the information is specific to one program or system and not generalizable to a broader population.[271]

You may consider incorporating a survey or other feedback method into your victim engagement process and offering it to all victims served. This enables broad participation and offers clients another chance to have their voices heard. However, you must ensure that participation in such activities is voluntary and confidential and consider when participation would be burdensome to a victim.

Other methods for recruitment that might be appropriate for both practitioners and victims include snowball, convenience, and purposive sampling.[272] Snowball sampling involves asking current participants if they know of any other individuals who may be willing to participate, or recruiting by "word-of-mouth." Convenience sampling means drawing participants from a readily available or easily accessed sample, such as posting flyers about the evaluation at a local police station or crisis center. Purposive sampling occurs when evaluators are specifically interested in a narrowly-defined group, such as sexual assault victims with untested SAKs who experienced victimization between the ages of 18 and 24 years old.[273] With any type of sampling design, it is important to be mindful of potential bias of the information collected.

5) Analyze Data

After data has been collected, it is time to conduct analysis. Naturally, the type of analysis required depends on the type of data collected. Broadly, there are two types of data: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data can come from interviews, focus groups, observation reports, secondary data analysis, and possibly some items on surveys. Frequently, qualitative data deals with themes that arise in the description of participants' experiences. This type of data can highlight the voices of participants too. When evaluating a victim notification protocol, qualitative data might include open-ended interviews with victims about their thoughts and experiences during notification.

Quantitative data, on the other hand, typically takes the form of numbers. Quantitative data can come from closed-ended survey questions, ratings made in observation reports, or statistics in secondary data sources. Quantitative data about a victim notification program could include the number of victims notified or the percent of SAKs tested that yielded a DNA profile. Analyzing data can be very simple. It can also be very advanced if a jurisdiction is able to work with a skilled statistician.

Action Research Approach to Evaluation – Real-Time Feedback and Improvements

Although traditional program evaluation (as described above) has been used effectively in many situations and fields, it does not always allow for adjustment and "course correcting"

based on the information received. The *NoVA Change Process* includes a feedback loop between change implementation and evaluation in order to reflect the concept that a central purpose of evaluation is to inform ongoing learning and adjustments. Action research is focused specifically on evaluating innovative and rapidly changing programs, and designed to provide useful feedback about the program quickly enough to allow improvements to be implemented.[274]

Action research can be a useful tool for projects that take place quickly in changing conditions, or when interventions may be changed in response to research or evaluation findings. Action research describes a type of inquiry that is collaborative and involves feedback loops and an iterative processes between researchers and practitioners.[275] For the purposes of this guide, the action research model that will be examined most closely is the one used by NIJ.

Figure 3.5. The National Institute of Justice Action Research Model
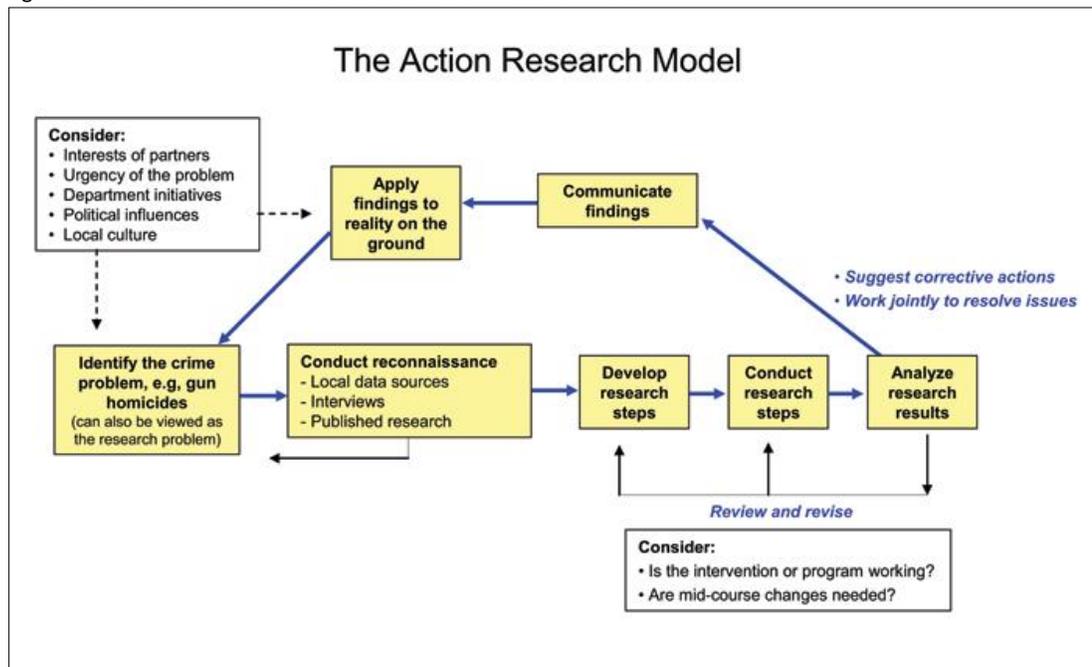
Reprinted with permission from: National Institute of Justice (2010). *Gun violence prevention strategies: Action research.* Retrieved from https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/pages/action-research.aspx

NIJ employs action research to create partnerships and encourage collaboration between police, researchers, and other community partners. Because every situation, community, and partnership is different, the action research model is adaptable.[276]

NIJ lists several steps in the action research process:

1. Establish a working group of law enforcement, community partners, and researchers.
2. Have the group review available data and devise a solution based on the law enforcement and community partners' knowledge of the community and on the researchers' knowledge of best practices.
3. Apply intervention.
4. Collect and analyze additional data on the intervention. Relay findings back to the group.
5. Ask the group to suggest adjustments to the intervention based on the researchers' findings, if necessary.

This iterative process of intervention and review allows for adaptation by both researchers and practitioners.

Action research and researcher-practitioner partnerships may not be appropriate or feasible in every community. Jurisdictions that are interested in engaging in action research have several resources available to them: they can apply for funding from agencies and organizations that are supportive of such partnerships, or they can reach out to local universities or research institutions who may be able to provide research support or consultation.

Community Example: Action Research and Evaluation in Detroit

The Detroit SAK project was an action research project funded by NIJ. It included a partnership between law enforcement, researchers, prosecutors, system-based victim advocates, community-based victim advocates, nursing, forensic scientists, and an information technology (IT) specialist.[277] The following section uses Detroit as a case example of evaluation techniques.

The goals of the Detroit project were to:

1. Assess the scope of the problem by conducting a census of untested SAKs.
2. Identify underlying factors that contributed to the inventory of untested SAKs in Detroit.
3. Develop a plan for testing SAKs, and evaluate the efficacy of that plan.
4. Develop a victim notification protocol, and evaluate the efficacy of that protocol.

Several factors made this project appropriate for action research. First, the problem existed in a dynamic environment, with relatively few examples of how to successfully address it. Second, the working group needed to be able to attempt testing and notification, and then adapt their approach based on early outcomes. Additionally, the victim notification protocol in Detroit was flexible and non-standardized by design, complicating any traditional evaluation efforts.[278]

Continued on next page.

Because researchers could not be present and observe victim notifications, data collection about notifications involved retrospective interviews with practitioners. The Detroit team had four sources of data for their evaluation:

- Ethnographic observations: Researchers acted as "participant-observers" during all team meetings.
- Individual interviews were conducted with all core members of the project.
- Archival records were provided from the Detroit police department's property database and organizational records from other involved agencies.
- Focus groups: Researchers conducted three focus groups with practitioners to determine lessons learned.

The Detroit team also developed measurement instruments to collect and record data from these sources using the following steps. They:

- Developed data tracking tools for investigators to record specific steps to locate victims and their perceptions of victim notification meetings, with a focus on victim reactions.
- Wanted similar data from advocates, so the team had to maintain confidentiality by de-identifying all information.
- Examined data to address questions about ability to locate survivors.
- Examined data to identify patterns and three general types of perceived reactions from victims (strong negative, strong positive, and absence of strong negative or positive).

They were then able to examine the correlation between the reactions of victims with other victim variables such as amount of time passed since the assault, victim age at the time of assault, and victim/offender relationship.

Figure 3.6. Detroit Pilot Victim Notification Protocol
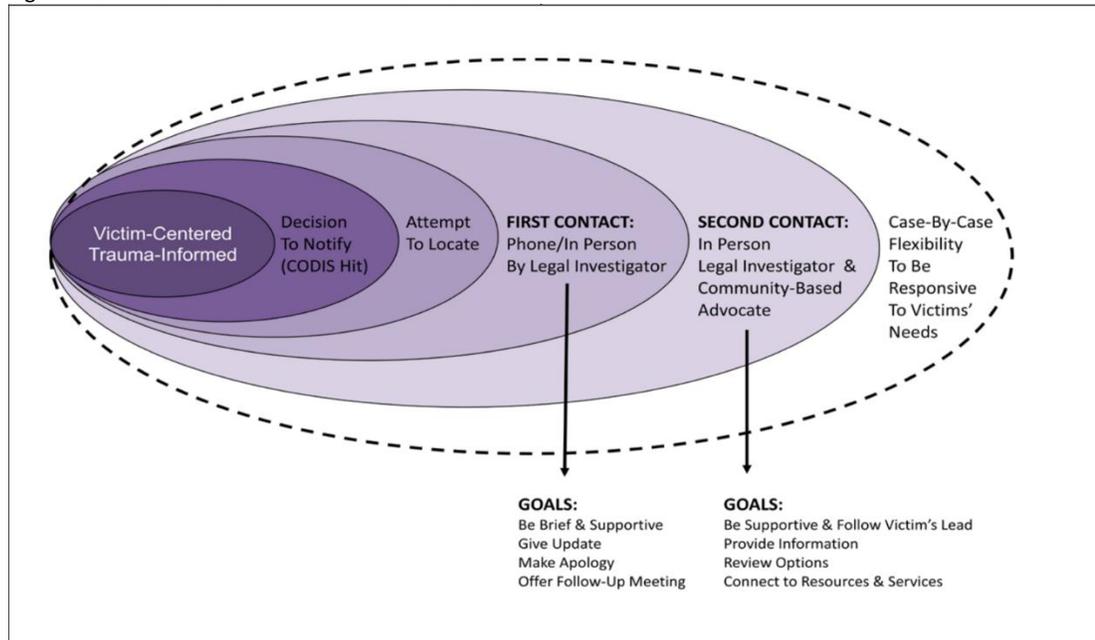
Reprinted with permission from: Campbell, R., Fehler-Cabral, G., Pierce, S. J., Sharma, D. B., Bybee, D., Shaw, J. …Feeney, H. (2015). *The Detroit sexual assault kit (SAK) action research project (ARP) (Report No. 248680)*. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248680.pdf

Researchers and community members in your area can collaborate and apply these methods to evaluate your process of victim notification. This measured and adjustable approach provides an essential look at the work of victim notification for SAKs, and can help to identify best practices for your community and others. Program evaluations objectively review and ultimately improve victim notification practices. Evaluations like these give answers to the questions of, "How are we doing?" and, "How can we do it better?" In all research, including program evaluation, you should consider consulting with professional researchers in order to confirm that your plans and methods are appropriate and do not cause additional harm or burden to victims.

Tools for Practice

Developing a Logic Model for Your Community

Instructions: *Together with members of your multidisciplinary team, create a logic model that outlines the victim notification protocol development and implementation in your community. What resources do you have to use as "inputs," and how will you use them? What are the project's goals?*

You can use Table 3.6 and the sample logic model below as your guide or as a way to start discussions. When you have finished, critically examine the "flow" of the model. Do the inputs and activities logically connect to your desired outputs and goals? If not, how can you alter the model and plan for the project so that they do?

Table 3.6. Creating a Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
What you are "putting in" to the project?	What will happen during the implementation of this project?	What will be the tangible, countable results of this project?	What specific, measurable things will have happened during this project?	What will happen because of this project?

Additional Tools (see references list to access the following resources):

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Evaluation Guide: Developing and Using a Logic Model[279]

> This evaluation guide offers a general overview of the development and use of logic models as planning and evaluation tools. For more information, see https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/logic_model.pdf

CDC Evaluation Documents, Workbooks, and Tools[280]

> Many CDC programs have developed materials to assist with evaluation. This online resource includes guidance on logic model development, performance indicators and measurements, and strategies, interventions, and best practices. For more information, see https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/logic_model.pdf

Conclusion

Driven by research in the field, best practices, and lessons learned, the *Notification for Victims of Assault (NoVA) Change Process* fills a specific need within communities working to clear untested SAKs. The NoVA Guide follows national trends and policies, highlighting the many reasons why SAKs went untested and the dynamics at play that are common across jurisdictions. The solutions also need to be commonly understood, multidisciplinary, and have the best interest of victims and the larger community in mind. The *NoVA Change Process* is guided by the notion that, in order to effectively test the volume of SAKs and notify victims without causing further trauma, individuals, organizations, and teams must engage in thoughtful reflection, informed planning, and ongoing assessment of their protocols and change efforts. As local and national attention is focused on resolving the problem of untested SAKs in numerous communities, this is an opportune time to make changes that are survivor-centered, collaborative, and can have long-lasting impact on the criminal justice system.

Additional Resources

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
CODIS	FBI	https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/biometric-analysis/codis/codis_brochure	CODIS brochure on history, development, and uses of CODIS
CODIS & NDIS	FBI	https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/codis/codis-and-ndis-fact-sheet	FAQs on CODIS and NDIS (National DNA Index System)
FETI	Certified FETI	https://www.certifiedfeti.com/	Information on research, training, and FETI certification
Forensic DNA	Forensic Technology Center of Excellence	https://forensiccoe.org/	A program of the National Institute of Justice that provides evidence-based resources on forensic technologies and emerging challenges
Forensic DNA	National Institute of Justice	https://www.nij.gov/topics/forensics/evidence/dna/pages/welcome.aspx	Definition of forensic DNA, description of types and collection, yearly reports, and links

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
"I am evidence" Film Discussion Questions and Resources	International Association of Forensic Nurses	http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.forensicnurses.org/resource/resmgr/media/IAMEvidence_Supplemental_Dis.pdf	Supplemental facilitated discussion guide and key messages for medical providers
Implicit Bias	Project Implicit	https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/	Provides online tools to explore implicit associations and potential beliefs
Making Sense of Backlogs - Myths Vs. Reality	National Institute of Justice Journal No. 266	https://www.nij.gov/journals/266/pages/backlogs.aspx	Article (6/2019) that defines backlogs (and types) and increased demand for DNA testing
Multidisciplinary Response to SAK	National Institute of Justice	https://www.nij.gov/topics/law-enforcement/investigations/sexual-assault/Pages/national-best-practices-for-sexual-assault-kits.aspx	Article (8/8/17) with 35 recommendations for creating victim-centered responses/approaches
National Center for Trauma-Informed Care	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic	Information, resources, training, and technical assistance options on trauma-informed approaches
Notification Protocols	Sexual Assault Kit Initiative	https://sakitta.org/resources/docs/SAKI-Victim-Notification-Guide.pdf	12 key questions to guide victim notification protocols

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
Resiliency/Self Care	CopLine	http://www.copline.org/	24/7 peer-support hotline for active law enforcement and their families.
SAK Backlog	Natasha's Justice Project	https://natashasjusticeproject.org	Provides resources and information about the SAK backlog
SAK Backlog Advocacy	Rape Kit Action Project	http://www.everykitcounts.org	Information about the severity of SAK Backlogs in the United States and call to action for policy makers
SAK Testing	National Institute of Justice	http://nij.gov/multimedia/Pages/video-fbi-sak-issues.aspx?ed2f26df2d9c416fbdddd2330a778c6=snllxlxohx-sdbxhdyo	(Video – 1/11/16) How scientific advances can help jurisdictions process a large number of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits
SAKs	CNN	http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/health/rape-kit-history/	The story behind the first rape kit (11/21/15)
SAKs	National Institute of Justice	http://nij.gov/multimedia/Pages/video-fbi-sak-what-is-a-kit.aspx?ed2f26df2d9c416fbdddd2330a778c6=javvsvsgpw-jdcsjdwg	(Video – 1/11/16) Explanation of what a Sexual Assault Kit is and how it is used in an investigation.

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
SART	Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs	https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/sartkit/	Tools and resources for developing a SART
SART	End Violence Against Women International	http://www.evawintl.org/PAGEID7/Best-Practices/Resources/SARRTs	Best practices for SARTs with links to various state best practice examples as well as SART evaluation report
Sexual Assault / Sexual Violence	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html	Definitions, prevention strategies, research, and references
Sexual Assault Forensic Exams / Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners	International Association of Forensic Nurses	http://www.forensicnurses.org	Membership organization for Forensic Nursing with resources and publications on a variety of forensic nursing topics
Trauma-Informed Approach	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions	6 key principles included in effective trauma-informed approaches (2014; 2018)
Victim Experience with Notification	Standard-Examiner	http://www.standard.net/Police/2015/06/28/Utah-law-enforcement-rape-advocates-writing-victim-notification-protocols	Article (6/28/15) about a victim's experience with notification and how it led to the creation of a victim-centered notification protocol for Utah Police Department

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
Victim Notification	End Violence Against Women International	http://www.evawintl.org/PAGEID22/Best-Practices/Resources/Victim-Notification	Untested evidence, key questions in victim notification, link to Detroit report, recommendations in Oregon
Victim Safety (VINE)	Appriss Safety	https://apprisssafety.com/solutions/vine/?wvideo=3072uggwvo	Description of VINE, scope, participating jurisdictions, and how to access information for specific states and jurisdictions
Victim-Centered Response	Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center	https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline VATOnline.cfm	Web-based victim assistance training program that offers the essential skills and knowledge to more effectively assist victims of crime –includes courses on sexual assault, victims' rights, confidentiality, crisis intervention, trauma-informed care, referrals, self-care, and special populations

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program	RAINN	https://www.rainn.org/articles/debbie-smith-act	Background and plain English explanation of Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program
SAFER Act	RAINN	https://www.rainn.org/articles/safer-act	Background and plain English explanation of SAFER Act (2013)
SAK Backlog Advocacy	Joyful Heart Foundation	http://www.endthebacklog.org	Information about untested SAK inventories with an interactive map for each state, resources for reporting on the issue, and a legislative handbook
Sexual Assault Victims' Rights	National Center for Victims of Crime - DNA Resource Center	http://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/dna-resource-center/untested-sexual-assault-kits/victims'-rights-and-sexual-assault-kits	Sexual assault victims' rights related to SAKs with links to state and federal laws
Victim Notification Advocacy	Joyful Heart Foundation	http://www.endthebacklog.org/information-survivors/victim-notification	Information about what victim notification is, why it matters, current practices and legislation, recommended best practices, and survivor FAQs

Topic	Source	Web Address	Description
Victim-Centered Response	National Center for Victims of Crime - DNA Resource Center	https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/dna-resource-center/untested-sexual-assault-kits/victim-notification/protocol-resources	Protocols used by various jurisdictions, letters to survivors, sample notification policies, and other sexual assault-related resources
Victims' Rights	National Center for Victims of Crime	http://victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims/get-help-bulletins-for-crime-victims/victims'-rights	Overview of victims' rights and who may assert these rights

Appendix A: Essential Facts and Foundational Information

The term "forensic evidence" refers to physical evidence that can be examined scientifically to help with the investigation and prosecution of a crime.[281] Forensic DNA evidence can be used to help identify perpetrators, recognize patterns of serial offending, facilitate criminal investigations and prosecutions, and provide evidence of innocence/exoneration.[282] Forensic DNA evidence in sexual assault cases is generally collected during a medical-forensic exam, often called a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE), or performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), depending on the credentials of the person providing the exam. During the exam, a sexual assault kit (SAK), also known as a "rape kit," is used to collect forensic evidence samples from the body or clothing of the victim.[283] These samples can include semen, saliva, blood, skin, and any other relevant biological evidence.[284] Additional pieces of evidence that are not collected as part of SAKs, like clothing or bedding, may be collected by a nurse or law enforcement officer. All of this evidence can then be tested in a laboratory.

Once in a laboratory, the evidence is screened for presence of biological matter or tested directly for the presence of DNA. Testing is conducted to determine a DNA profile, which can then be compared to DNA samples collected from suspects, the victim, consensual partners, or to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).[285]

When a "hit" is returned from a CODIS-eligible DNA database, it is categorized as an offender hit or a forensic hit, sometimes referred to as a "case-to-case" hit. An offender hit occurs when an unknown sample is compared to DNA databases of arrestees (where applicable) and convicted offenders and returns a possible match. Once confirmed, the identity of the offender will be known. In forensic, or "case-to-case" hits, the unknown sample is compared to DNA databases of other unknown forensic profiles, meaning that the profile matched evidence from another criminal case, but the identity of the perpetrator

remains unknown.[286] One study found that, of cases that produced biological evidence, 41% generated a DNA profile, 29% of these matched a sample obtained from a suspect, 16% matched a convicted offender in CODIS, and 7% produced a "case-to-case" hit in CODIS. In case-to-case hits, DNA evidence can be used to link crimes and get a more complete picture of a pattern of offending.[287] When a DNA profile matches an already identified suspect, it can provide evidence of sexual contact.[288]

DNA testing has progressed significantly in the last couple of decades. In many instances, the technological and scientific progress has outpaced the capacity of many laboratories and jurisdictions. It was only in 1998 that the FBI first established the National DNA Index System, which is one of the databases comprising the CODIS.[289] CODIS consists of national (NDIS), state (SDIS), and local (LDIS) DNA databases. The Federal DNA Act governs which forensic DNA records are included in the NDIS and it also states that only criminal justice agencies may utilize the NDIS. Some profiles obtained from a SAK are excluded from being entered in the NDIS, such as those from any consensual sexual partners and that of the victim. For a profile to be eligible for uploading into CODIS/NDIS, the sample must have been obtained from a crime scene and, if there are known consensual partners, elimination samples must be requested.[290] The rapid expansion of CODIS-eligible profiles being uploaded to searchable DNA databases is one factor that is helping to facilitate the identifications of these offenders. If a "hit" is not returned in a particular case, that uploaded profile will remain in the database to be compared to future profiles. Contributing to the expansion of forensic DNA databases itself is a productive and meaningful outcome as it is only through the continual expansion and updating of these databases that more perpetrators are identified and held accountable.

DNA evidence can be a powerful tool in bringing offenders to justice. The presence of DNA evidence has been shown to significantly predict suspect identification and arrest and be related to a case making greater progress in the criminal justice system.[291] [292]

For more on forensic DNA evidence, see the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Forensic DNA website at https://www.nij.gov/topics/forensics/evidence/dna/pages/welcome.aspx

For additional information on CODIS and terms, refer to NIJ resource, National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250384.pdf

OVERVIEW OF NEUROBIOLOGY OF TRAUMA:

Emerging research indicates that trauma has many neurobiological consequences, including memory fragmentation and the "fight or flight" response (now frequently described as "fight, flight, or freeze"), which can overwhelm typical coping mechanisms.[293] Victims develop

coping mechanisms to mitigate trauma.[294] Trauma has many negative effects on the body and leads to the dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system and limbic system, meaning that levels of chemicals and hormones such as corticosteroids, opioids, and oxytocin are present in heightened or lowered levels, reducing the brain's ability to regulate stress responses, and potentially resulting in depression, anger, and hypervigilance.[295] It is vital that, when working with victims, practitioners recognize that victims may be experiencing an intense psychological burden.[296]

The brain is designed to react instinctively to the detection of threats to survival or experiences of trauma.[297] When the amygdala, which is responsible for processing emotional reactions and memories, detects a threat to survival, a chain reaction triggers the shutdown of typical brain functioning in the pre-frontal cortex, and the brain stem takes over. At this point, the victim is in "trauma mode." Hormones and chemicals released from the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and adrenal glands (the HPA axis) cause stress reactions. Evolutionarily, this chemical cascade has developed important mitigating effects, such as preventing pain and promoting positive feelings in an effort to enhance survival. However, in modern social contexts, this chemical cascade can also result in what seem to be counterintuitive victim behaviors.[298] Table AA1 on the next page provides an overview of these chemicals, their effects on victims, and how the release of these chemicals may translate into victim behavior. Additionally, the effects of these chemicals remain for up to 96 hours following the traumatic experience, or potentially, re-traumatization through notification. It is highly likely victims will still be experiencing them when they first interact with practitioners following the assault. Victims' behaviors and cognitive experiences may be different outside this 96-hour window and after a few sleep cycles.[299] The victim may exhibit different behaviors with each interaction with professionals working their case.[300]

Trauma also affects memory processing. Increased stress hormones from the HPA axis impair the functioning of the hippocampus, the brain structure tasked with memory processing. Stress hormones disrupt some neural mechanisms, including how memories are encoded and recalled. Generally, the brain encodes memories in a linear way in the absence of a threat. However, when the brain experiences trauma, it does not encode memories in the same linear fashion. Although the victim's memories are accurate, memory consolidation and recall can be difficult.[301] Traumatic memories are often vivid and directly related to sensory experiences, like hearing, smelling, and seeing rather than chronology.[302] [303]

The presence of alcohol and other drugs in the victim's system further affects the brain's ability to encode memories. In many sexual assault cases, alcohol is voluntarily, coercively, or forcibly consumed – tactics used by offenders to incapacitate a victim or exploit their vulnerabilities. Although victims do have accurate memories, law enforcement officials who

are not familiar with the effects of trauma may perceive victims' stories as untruthful or "sketchy." [304] Further, use of traditional law enforcement questioning techniques like the Reid Technique of interviewing (a chronological line of questioning used for recounting an incident), do not account for the way traumatic memories are encoded and stored in the brain, and may result in victims feeling judged.[305]

Table AA1. Neurobiological Reactions and Symptoms of Trauma [306] [307] [308]

Neurobiological Reaction	Physical/Psychological Symptom	What It Looks Like
Adrenaline release and lowered prefrontal cortex functioning	Impairment of rational thought	Victim doesn't respond "logically" to the assault.
	Fight, flight, or freeze	Victim may fight the offender, run away, or do neither of these things and "freeze" instead.
Opioid release	Flat affect, no emotion	Victim does not appear upset and is not crying.
Oxytocin release	Increases good feelings and bonding	Victim laughs, jokes, or expresses affection for offender.
Hippocampus functioning impaired	Memory processing is nonlinear and fragmented	Victim's story appears fragmented or disjointed.
		Victim may have accurate, vivid sense memories, but can't recall facts in a linear manner.

Applications to Victim Notification

All of the neurobiological effects of sexual assault victimization – HPA axis elevation, chemical and hormone flood, and pre-frontal cortex shut down – reoccur during victim notification.[309] This suggests that, for victims, "cold cases feel like current cases," and they may re-experience the effects of trauma. Reactivation of memories of the assault and the HPA axis could cause a number of negative effects during victim notification, including:

- Neurobiological distress.
- Flashbacks.
- Exacerbation of PTSD and other mental health issues.

- Possible increase in substance use and self-medicating behaviors.[310]

Although it may not be possible to avoid these trauma symptoms, there is emerging evidence for several best practices to minimize risk to victims during notification:[311]

- Victims need caring emotional support.
- Victims need accurate and complete information and time to fully understand their options and make decisions about whether and how to move forward. Practitioners should give victims choices about their involvement throughout the criminal justice process; for example, as much as possible, victims should be able to choose the time, place and location of interviews.
- Victims need advocacy and follow-up support services to work through both the initial trauma and potential re-traumatization of notification.[312]

INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

In addition to established interviewing tools like Cognitive Interview techniques, there are emerging best practices, such as Russell Strand's Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) method, that help minimize the risks of re-traumatization during interviews with victims.[313] [314] [315] Meta-analysis using 25 years of research shows that the Cognitive Interview is a sound practice for interviewing witnesses.[316] Russell Strand's FETI method (described further in Table AA2) incorporates best practices from neuroscience on trauma and memory, psycho-educational crisis intervention, forensic interviewing techniques, and clinical psychology methods. Disciplines such as the military, criminal justice, and victim advocacy use the FETI method.[317]

FETI brain-based cues are designed to address not only the "who, what, why, when, and where" of traditional law enforcement questioning, but the "experiential aspects of the crime." In doing so, FETI questions ask about the victim's experiences with sight, sound, smell, and feeling as well as their thoughts and the impact of the assault. FETI questions are open-ended and designed to help elicit memories as well as collect evidence of physiological trauma reactions.[318]

The following table describes FETI brain-based cues for interviewing victims. These techniques and questions help victims feel at ease during the interview, and prompt victims to discuss their subjective experiences. This is helpful for victims who may not be able to recall linear "facts," but have sense memories of the assault. Additionally, it collects evidence of physiological trauma reactions. Training is recommended prior to using FETI. For more information, visit https://www.certifiedfeti.com/

Table AA2. Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviewing (FETI) Brain-Based Cues

What are you able to tell me about your experience?
Tell me more about…
Help me understand your thoughts when…
What are you able to remember about… Sight? Smell? Sound? Taste? Touch? Body sensation?
What were your reactions to this experience emotionally and physically?
What was the most difficult part of this for you?
What, if anything, can't you forget?
How has this experience impacted you?

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VICTIM NOTIFICATION WITH JUVENILES

In this guide, a juvenile is defined as a person age 15 or under who is not emancipated. State laws vary regarding the definition of a juvenile. For instance, there is often a difference in the definition of the "age of majority" (or the age which constitutes adulthood) in criminal, civil, and medical contexts.[319] In most medical and civil contexts, the age of majority is 18 years. In the majority of states, the criminal code age of majority is 17 years, but may be as young as 16 years.[320] When victims are currently under the age of majority, 18 years, notification teams may need to comply with mandated reporting requirements if an offender is identified and is still in the home. Your working group should include Child Protective Services in developing protocols that involve juveniles.

All victim notification protocols should protect the safety and confidentiality of all victims whenever possible and focus on victim choice.[321] [322] Because of the age and developmental stage of juvenile victims, and the need to assure juvenile victim safety, these considerations are even more important. Research demonstrates the negative impact of media attention on child victims. Consequences can include feelings of shame and stigmatization, which may more strongly predict rates of PTSD than the assault itself.[323] [324] Children may also experience shaming or rejection from their peers following victimization.[325] Juvenile victims may be more likely than adults to experience emotional dysregulation, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and have alcohol-related problems in adulthood.[326] [327] Your juvenile victim notification protocol should build on the emerging evidence from Detroit, Houston, and Los Angeles, as well as from the broad knowledge on child abuse survivors, interview practices for juveniles, and work with child victims of sex trafficking.[328] [329] [330] [331] [332] [333]

While the topic of child and adolescent development is vast, the following are a few of the ways development may impact the notification process.

Emotional regulation: Children are learning to identify their own and others' emotions, yet still rely on parents or other adult support for coping strategies; even into adolescence, they can still be vulnerable to reactive emotions and impulsivity.[334]

Social communication: Children are learning to interpret and use non-verbal communication skills and adapt their language for different audiences; adolescents begin to communicate assertively and question authority.[335]

Cognition: Children are forming concrete cognitive function and an understanding of the world around them; adolescents begin to develop more complex, abstract thinking and their own self-concept.[336]

In adolescence, biological development occurs at a faster rate than psychosocial and emotional development, and traumatic experiences and resulting stress can interrupt normal development for children and adolescents.[337]

Categories of Juveniles

There are several possibilities related to the current legal status of a juvenile victim. The current legal status of the victim will affect the notification process. See Figure AA1 for possible legal statuses of victims who were juveniles at the time of the assault.

Figure AA1. Juvenile Case (less than 16 at time)
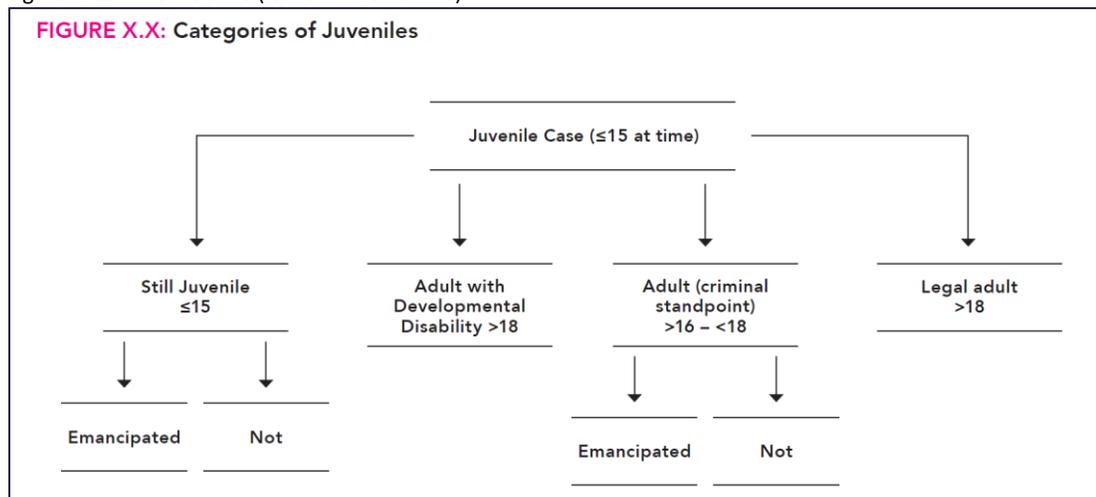
FIGURE X.X: Categories of Juveniles

Juvenile Case (≤15 at time)

Still Juvenile ≤15 | Adult with Developmental Disability >18 | Adult (criminal standpoint) >16 – <18 | Legal adult >18

Emancipated | Not

Emancipated | Not

Busch-Armendariz, N., Sulley, C., Hoefer, S., Backes, B., Dempster, M., & Thompson, J. (2019). Notification for victims of sexual assault (NoVA): A guide for communities with untested sexual assault kits. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin. © 2019 Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault. All rights reserved.

Appendix B: More Tools for Practice

Instructions: The fictitious scenario was developed using a combination of common elements, behaviors, and responses to sexual assault. The case study is designed to help the reader think critically about practice scenarios related to victim notification. Critical thinking questions follow each case study.

Note on content: This case study graphically depicts a sexual assault.

Note on format: The service providers' actions are bulleted in the case study for clarity and ease of reading.

Gina is a community college graduate and works as an administrative assistant in a medical clinic. In 2001, Gina, at age 22, is at a happy hour with former classmates. A male acquaintance, Mike, also a former classmate, asks Gina where she lives and offers to drive her home at the end of the evening. Although Gina planned to take a taxi after five drinks, she is ready to go home. Gina accepts his offer and they leave. Upon arriving outside her apartment, Mike kisses Gina and says he has liked her since they went to school together. Gina pulls away and says, "Don't touch me, I'm not interested in you like that." Ignoring what she said, Mike aggressively grabs her and tries to pull Gina's pants down and undoes his pants. Gina struggles and Mike hits her head on the dashboard, and then forces Gina's head down and her mouth onto his penis. After a few minutes, Mike pulls Gina's head up and ejaculates on Gina's face, hair, and shirt. Gina is able to pull away from Mike's reach, get out of the vehicle, and run into her apartment. Mike does not follow her. Gina goes to a hospital a few hours later, accompanied by her sister, and consents to a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination.

- A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner provides medical treatment and collects forensic evidence.

- A community-based advocate sits with Gina at the hospital and during the examination, and departs when police arrive.
- Police arrive and ask Gina a series of questions. Gina has difficulty answering their questions; she cannot recall what Mike said to her, what she said to him, or the sequence of events in detail.
- A sex crimes investigator is assigned to her case. The investigator calls Gina two days later and schedules an appointment for her to come in for an interview.
- A law enforcement-based victim services provider also calls Gina and speaks with her about the next steps in the investigation, provides information on the state's crime victim compensation program, and provides information on the local sexual assault and domestic violence program.

In the week following the assault, Gina begins to have nightmares, trouble sleeping, and difficulty concentrating. Gina is worried and fearful because Mike knows where she lives. Gina begins having difficulties at work, making mistakes, and coming in late. After multiple late arrivals and increasingly poor performance at work, Gina's supervisor puts her on a performance improvement plan and issues a final warning that she cannot arrive late.

- The victim services provider calls Gina the morning of the interview and leaves a voicemail message reminding her of the appointment. Gina forgot to ask for time off, has a panic attack, and does not go.
- A week later, the investigator calls Gina and leaves a voicemail message. The investigator states that they cannot move forward if Gina does not call back and that they can meet Gina in a location of her choice. The investigator says that this is very important and asks Gina to call back.
- Gina receives a voicemail from the community-based advocate, but does not return the call.
- Gina has another panic attack and is late to work. Gina's supervisor calls her into the office and tells her how disappointed she is and that she has to let her go.
- The investigator leaves Gina two additional voicemail messages.

With no income, Gina moves out of her apartment and into her sister's home. After a few weeks, Gina calls the investigator and leaves a voicemail message that she has been in the middle of moving and will try to call the investigator back soon. Gina struggles with anxiety and eventually visits the sexual assault and domestic violence program and attends four counseling sessions. Gina's sister is emotionally and financially supportive, and in six months Gina finds a new job.

- The investigator is flooded with cases and wishes to take Gina's lead and waits for her to call back while working on other cases.

- Thirteen years later, in 2014, an investigator calls Gina, age 35, and tells her there is new evidence related to her 2001 sexual assault report.

Critical Reflection Questions: Worksheet

1. What factors contributed to Gina's reaction to engaging with law enforcement in her case in 2001?

2. What are the important considerations for re-engaging Gina in the criminal justice process in 2014?

3. How might the investigator approach next steps in the notification process in Gina's case?

SWOT ANALYSIS OF BRIEF CASE STUDIES

***Directions*:** For the case studies described below, please:

1. Perform a SWOT analysis describing the relevant factors in the case related to contacting the victim and providing information.

2. Determine what other information you would need or want to know to make a final decision about notifying the victim in the case.

3. Discuss how the ethical principles of procedural justice theory discussed in the table below would inform your decision making about notification in this case.

A SWOT analysis is a framework that, in this case, examines:

- Strengths (S) – favorable internal aspects of notification that promote recovery and limit re-traumatization

- Weaknesses (W) – internal aspects that may cause re-traumatization and other challenges

- Opportunities (O) – external factors that improve the effectiveness of notification and maximize positive outcomes

- Threats (T) – external factors that cause problems around effectiveness and outcomes

Table 3.1. Procedural Justice in Practice

Procedural Justice Concept	Definition	Examples in Notification
Representation and Voice	Victim is heard, has opportunity to speak and represent self.	Victim able to express their frustration with case, SAK not tested until now.
Accuracy	Decisions about case are made based on accurate information.	Professional creates a positive environment for victim and obtains helpful case information.
Neutrality	Decisions are made based on consistent rule application.	Professional contacts victim, despite prior documentation of victim unwilling to cooperate.
Respect and Dignity	Victim is treated respectfully and with dignity.	Professional says to victim, "Your case is important," and listens to victim's response.
Fair Treatment	Victim's rights are acknowledged, treatment is polite and courteous.	Professional discusses victim's rights and responds patiently to questions.

Note on content: These case studies graphically depict sexual assault. The scenarios are fictitious and were developed using a combination of common elements, behaviors, and responses to sexual assault.

Case #1

In 1995, 24-year-old Devan, a second-generation Indian-American man, met a man at a bar near his apartment, and began dancing with and kissing him. Somewhat intoxicated, Devan agreed to go to the man's car with him, but once inside he decided he did not want to continue and told him to stop touching him and let him out of the car. The man physically restrained Devan and forced his mouth onto his penis. Devan struggled and scratched the man, ending up with blood under his fingers, and the man opened the car door and pushed Devan out before driving off. After several hours, Devan went to the hospital and had a forensic exam done. While at the hospital, Devan spoke to the police from the local large municipal city police department. He could not remember the assailant's name, and Devan was worried about outing himself and that he would be blamed for the assault. He felt that the officers were suspicious of him and did not "take his case seriously." Devan was not contacted by an investigator, and did not follow up at the time.

Twenty-one years later, Devan's SAK is tested and the blood under his fingernails yields a CODIS offender hit. Detective Morgan is assigned to his case, has attempted to reach Devan by phone several times with no reply, and is considering trying to find Devan at his home address.

Case #2

In 2000, 30-year-old Sarah, a Deaf Caucasian woman, was home alone, asleep in her apartment when a man broke in, restrained her, and raped her. Because the room was dark, Sarah was unable to see the man's face or any distinguishing features. However, in the past three months, she had been being stalked and harassed by a neighbor that she dated briefly. After the assailant left, Sarah called a friend who accompanied her to the hospital for a forensic exam. Sarah spoke to the police from the mid-sized municipal police department serving her suburban area. She told them that she suspected the neighbor and about his actions over the last few months. She found the officers to be compassionate and helpful, and she was willing to be involved in the case as much as possible. However, the case did not move forward due to a lack of leads, and Sarah's SAK was never tested due to lack of a suspect for forensic comparison.

Sixteen years later, Sarah's SAK is tested, and a forensic CODIS hit links the offender to several other cases in which DNA was collected, but the identity of the offender remains unknown. Detective Baker and a victim advocate named Mary must decide if and how to notify Sarah that her SAK has yielded a CODIS hit, and that the offender might have

committed several similar assaults. Mary and Detective Baker have a phone number for Sarah, but are not sure if that is the most appropriate way to reach out to her.

Case #3

In 1990, Moira, a 40-year-old African American woman, was assaulted by a stranger in a county park near her home. The stranger held Moira down while he forced his penis into her mouth, and digitally penetrated her. After several minutes, the man ejaculated on her face and hair, then left. Moira reported the crime to the police at the local county sheriff's office serving her rural area. She consented to a forensic exam at a hospital located fifteen miles from her home. Moira's case however did not move forward, and her SAK was never tested.

Twenty-six years later, the statute of limitations has run out on Moira's case. However, her SAK is tested as part of an initiative to test all backlogged SAKs, and returns an offender CODIS hit. Although Moira's case cannot be prosecuted, the offender has also been identified in several other cases that have not reached the statute of limitations yet. Investigators and prosecutors in those cases feel that Moira's testimony could be useful during the sentencing phase of the other cases, and hope to gain her participation. Unfortunately, they have already left several messages on her cell phone with no reply and are trying to decide what their next step should be.

Case #4

In 2010, Sofia, a 22-year-old Latina woman, was raped by her "on-again, off-again" boyfriend of three years, Nick, at his home. Nick had been verbally and emotionally abusive in the past, but had not been sexually violent before this incident. The next day, Sofia's mother took her to the hospital, where Sofia had a forensic exam done, and tearfully spoke to the police from the local municipal police department serving her small city. However, in the coming weeks, Sofia and Nick reconciled, and Sofia stopped communicating with the police. Her case did not move forward, and her SAK was never tested.

Six years later, Sofia's SAK is tested as part of an initiative to test all backlogged kits. DNA testing produces a CODIS offender hit identifying Nick, who is also linked to several other sexual assault cases. Detective Gonzalez and Catherine, the victim advocate, want to notify Sofia, but do not know if she is still in contact Nick. They have tried to contact Sofia on her cell phone with no reply, and have been hesitant to leave a message in case Nick has access to Sofia's phone. They have both Sofia's home address and work address, and are trying to decide whether to continue trying to contact her, and if so, where to begin.

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VICTIM NOTIFICATION BRIEFING SHEET

A Briefing Sheet is a quick reference guide to further advance the use of best practices in sexual assault response for law enforcement, prosecution, and advocacy professionals. The Briefing Sheet offers a challenging case circumstance faced by professionals along with five additional elements, as described in the key below. Briefing Sheets were originally developed for *The Blueprint for Campus Police: Responding to Sexual Assault.*[338]

Icon	Briefing Sheet Section	Content
	Common Case Circumstance	Characteristics and elements of the case that will often reappear because of the nature of sexual assault trauma experienced by victims and perpetrator behavior.
	Barriers and Misinformation to Investigation, Prosecution, or Advocacy	Ways in which case circumstances are persistently misunderstood.
	Deterrents to Criminal Justice Response	Ways that barriers and misinformation can hinder law enforcement investigations, prosecution, or advocacy.
	Current Science	Current scientific information about the case circumstance generated from existing, published research and reliable sources of practice-based information from professional organizations.
	Best Practices	Best response for investigation of sexual assault based on current science.

Common Case Circumstance

Victim did not want to participate in services or in the case's investigation or prosecution. Or, the victim "dropped out" of the process after seeking safety or after the initial report.

Barriers and Misinformation to Investigation, Prosecution, or Advocacy

- Belief that victims who did not want to engage at time of initial report will not want to re-engage in the case
- Belief that trauma is the same for all victims
- Belief that victims in "actual" "credible" cases will continue through the whole process

- Belief that participating in the criminal justice system is the best or only way to find justice
- Belief that victims' prior experiences with the system will not influence their reactions when re-engaged

⚠️ Deterrents to Criminal Justice System Response

The following experiences can affect current re-engagement efforts and can become deterrents to the system response:

- The victim received poor or blaming responses from law enforcement, prosecution, or victim advocacy services during the initial disclosure or upon the re-opening of the case.
- The victim received poor or blaming responses from family and/or friends upon initial disclosure or upon the re-opening of the case.
- The victim knew the offender who perpetrated the sexual assault.
- The victim was not able to take time from responsibilities (work, school, childcare), or spend money to travel.
- Victim did not initiate the initial report.

🔍 Current Science

- The reopening of a sexual assault case can re-traumatize the victim, which may result in the victim's inability or unwillingness to participate.[339]
- In the Detroit Action Research Project, victims who were difficult to locate compared to victims who were easy to locate were equally likely to engage with the criminal justice process.[340]
- Holistic team training on neurobiology of trauma leads to better trauma-informed protocols and responses.[341]
- Historical inequities in the criminal justice system as a whole and its response to sexual assault, specifically, can lead to some victims' distrust of the system or unwillingness to participate or re-engage.[342][343]

🛡️ Best Practices

- Responders should anticipate a reactivation of trauma at the time of notification and should address this through such best practices as: demonstrating compassion; bringing a victim services provider if notifying the victim in person; and receiving training regarding neurobiology of trauma in sexual assault cases prior to notification.[344]

- Responders should not assume that victims who dropped out of initial investigation will not want to be notified or will not participate.[345]
- Law enforcement responders should utilize an "opt-in" system regarding victim notification, through a hotline or other means, for all victims who come forward. All system responders should then coordinate and conduct community outreach to let victims know about the option to receive notification.[346]
- System responders should address cultural competency and accessibility of the criminal justice system and of services for sexual assault victims. All system responders need to build culturally competent strategies to address the specific needs of the diverse communities impacted by sexual assault.[347] [348]

List of Abbreviations

BJA	Bureau of Justice Assistance (a component of the Department of Justice)
CCR	Coordinated Community Response
CODIS	Combined DNA Index System
CPS/APS	Child Protective Services/Adult Protective Services
DA	District Attorney
DANY	District Attorney of New York
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DOJ	Department of Justice
EMT/EMS	Emergency Medical Technician/Emergency Medical Services
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FETI	Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview
HPA	Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LE	Law Enforcement
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCTIC	National Center for Trauma-Informed Care
NIJ	National Institute of Justice (a component of the Department of Justice)
NoVA	Notification for Victims of Assault

NR-SAK	Non-Report Sexual Assault Kit
OVW	Office on Violence Against Women (a component of the Department of Justice)
PREA	Prison Rape Elimination Act
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SA	Sexual Assault
SAFE	Sexual Assault Forensic Examination
SAK(s)	Sexual Assault Kit(s)
SAKI	Sexual Assault Kit Initiative
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SANE	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner
SART	Sexual Assault Response Team
SWOT Analysis	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis
TI	Tonic Immobility
TIC	Trauma-Informed Care
VINE	Victim Information Notification Everyday

Glossary

Age of Majority: The age that constitutes adulthood in criminal, civil, and medical contexts. In most medical and civil contexts, the age of majority is 18 years. In most states, the criminal code age of majority is 17 years, but may be as young as 16 years.[349]

Agency Readiness for Change: This describes an organization's ability to advocate for and implement change. This may involve an agency's leadership, multi-disciplinary dialogue, and the availability of practical resources.

Alternative Reporting: Alternative options for reporting honor victims' choice and provide the possibility of converting to a standard/formal report to law enforcement later.[350] Alternative reporting strategies can include anonymous reporting, allowing a victim to speak to an officer "off the record," allowing third party reporting (allowing an officer to speak to a victim's friend or family member who has knowledge of the incident), or non-investigative reporting. Often these three terms are used interchangeably.[351]

Amygdala: The portion of the brain that is responsible for detecting threats to survival and processing emotional reactions and memories. The amygdala is part of the limbic system and can contribute to counterintuitive victim behaviors.

Archival Records: Materials, including text and paper documents, photographs, videos, or sound recordings, that are preserved because they function as evidence.[352] Archival records can be a valuable source of information about the history of cases or an agency, as in the Detroit project.[353]

Autonomic Nervous System: The part of the nervous system that is outside of conscious control. This part of the nervous system reacts quickly and controls most of the internal organs and physiologic processes, such as the reaction now known commonly as "fight, flight, or freeze."

Backlogged SAKs: The National Institute of Justice defines backlogged kits as those that were "submitted to a crime lab and remain untested after 30 days."[354]

Barriers to Reporting: Community, personal, organizational, cultural belief(s) and/or structural system(s) that can inhibit, discourage, or make difficult the ability for victims to engage formally with the criminal justice system, including the ability to report a sexual assault to law enforcement.

Best Practice: "A procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption." [355]

Bias: (1) Prejudice for or against a particular thing or group that often has a racial, gendered, or sexual minority community membership component. Some bias is explicit, meaning that individuals are aware of and may express their biased views.[356] Bias can also be implicit, or "unconscious," meaning that it may influence individuals' perceptions and behavior without the person even being aware of it. Both types of bias, when present in service providers or criminal justice professionals, can lead to discriminatory actions like racial profiling[357] and, in the case of sexual assault response, to secondary victimization. (2) Systematic, often unintentional, approach or method of collecting (e.g., sampling), classifying, and/or analyzing data that ultimately favors some results over others.

Burnout: A process experienced by an individual as a result of inequity, stress, sense of loss, and lack of control in the workplace. Symptoms of burnout include physical and emotional exhaustion, depression, and anxiety, among others. It often leads to a decline in workplace performance and poor relational behaviors.[358]

Catalyst for Change: Contextual factor or change agent that creates a demand for change, like the discovery of a problem such as untested SAKs or media attention on the inventory of untested SAKs. Catalysts for change can come in a variety of forms from within an organization or from external factors, individuals, or groups.

Change Implementation: Action taken, such as adoption of a change, through leadership decisions and carrying out the change in the jurisdiction.

Change Maker/Champion: An individual who has high personal readiness for change and is also willing to lead others toward higher personal readiness. This person should be someone who has expertise and authority in their own discipline, credibility, influence, and who is able to allocate or advocate for resources and make decisions within their agency.

Client Satisfaction Surveys: Surveys that explore clients' feedback about services they have received. Client satisfaction surveys can provide useful information about client perceptions of both strengths and gaps in services, however they should not be used as the only indicator of success for a program, as clients generally report very high levels of satisfaction even when barriers or gaps may be present. [359]

Closed-Ended Questions: Questions that have pre-selected response options, like multiple choice questions, true-false, and most scale measures.

CODIS: Combined DNA Index System consisting of the national (NDIS), state (SDIS), and local (LDIS) DNA databases utilized by criminal justice agencies. For a profile to be eligible for uploading in to CODIS/NDIS, the sample must have been obtained from a crime scene and, if there are known consensual partners, elimination samples must also be submitted.[360]

Cold Cases: The definition of a cold case varies between agencies. NIJ currently defines a cold case as, "any case whose probative investigative leads have been exhausted," and the case remains unresolved.[361]

Community-Based Advocate: Advocates who are generally based in local nonprofits or community organizations and can offer confidentiality to victims. See also **system-based advocate.**

Confidentiality: The Office for Victims of Crime, Training and Technical Assistance Center defines confidentiality as those "rules prohibiting the disclosure of victim information. This includes limits to the disclosure of information without the victim's consent. This may require victim service providers to disclose any limits to confidentiality to a victim." See also **privacy.** [362]

Contextual Factors: Factors that influence the organization's ability to complete change, such as organizational culture, policies and procedures, past experience, organizational resources, organizational structure, history of the problem in the community, and community perception of the organization and problem.

Convenience Sampling: A method of recruitment that draws participants from a readily available or easily accessed sample, such as posting flyers about the research/evaluation at a local police station or crisis center.

Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Teams: A multidisciplinary group of professionals working on a team that focuses on communication, collaboration, and changing sexual assault response systems. The primary prevention approach of CCR teams, sometimes called Sexual Assault Response Teams or (SARTs), seek to improve

the response to sexual assault by coordinating the services of sexual assault responders.

Corticosteroids: "Corticosteroids are groups of natural and synthetic analogues of the hormones secreted by the hypothalamic-anterior pituitary-adrenocortical axis, more commonly referred to as the pituitary gland."[363] See also **cortisol.**

Cortisol: "The primary stress hormone, [which] increases sugars (glucose) in the bloodstream, enhances the brain's use of glucose, and increases the availability of substances that repair tissues. Cortisol also curbs functions that would be nonessential or detrimental in a fight-or-flight situation. It alters immune system responses and suppresses the digestive system, the reproductive system, and growth processes. This complex natural alarm system also communicates with regions of the brain that control mood, motivation, and fear."[364]

Criminal Justice System: "The set of agencies and processes established by governments to control crime and impose penalties on those who violate laws. There is no single criminal justice system in the United States, but rather many similar, individual systems. How the criminal justice system works in each area depends on the jurisdiction that is in charge: city, county, state, federal government, tribal government, or military installation. Most systems have five components – law enforcement, prosecution, defense attorneys, courts, and corrections –that each play a key role in the criminal justice process."[365]

Cultural Competence: "The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures helps to ensure the needs of all community members are addressed. 'Culture' is a term that goes beyond just race or ethnicity. It can also refer to such characteristics as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, income level, education, geographical location, or profession. Cultural competence means to be respectful and responsive to the health beliefs and practices – and cultural and linguistic needs – of diverse population groups. Developing cultural competence is also an evolving, dynamic process that takes time and occurs along a continuum." [366]

Data: Information that can be analyzed.[367] Data can be qualitative or quantitative, and can be collected through a variety of sources including interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Data Sources: The individuals, existing data sets, or other sources of information that will provide data for an evaluation.

Dating Violence: According to the Office on Violence Against Women, dating violence is, "violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim. The existence of such a relationship

shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors: (1) the length of the relationship, (2) the type of relationship, and (3) the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship."[368]

Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program (2004): Provides federal funding for labs to test untested SAKs and requires states create plans to reduce their SAK inventories.[369]

De-identifying: Removing identifying information, such as names, addresses, etc. from a data set. This process protects participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Project: A multi-disciplinary, collaborative action research project, funded by NIJ, to address the inventory of untested SAKs and conduct victim notification in Detroit, Michigan. For more information, see the Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Report. Available at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248680.pdf

Disassociation: A potential impact of trauma, which results in experiences "not [being] integrated into [a victim's] usual sense of self, resulting in discontinuities in conscious awareness."[370]

DNA Unit: A unit within a law enforcement agency dedicated solely to investigating cases with backlogged DNA evidence.

Domestic Violence (or Intimate Partner Violence): The OVW definition describes "a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person."[371]

Drug and Alcohol Facilitated Rape (DFR or DAFR): When the perpetrator knowingly gives the victim drugs and/or alcohol without their consent in order to incapacitate them, and subsequently perpetrates an unwanted sexual act against them involving oral, anal, or vaginal penetration. The victim is unconscious or awake, but too intoxicated by alcohol and/or drugs to understand what they are doing, to give permission, or to control their behavior.[372]

Encoded: New information, such as an experience or facts, that have been stored in short-term memory. Trauma experiences can interfere with memory encoding processes.

Ethnographic Observations: Observation technique that allows researchers to record data about events in "real-time" and in-context.[373] Type of data collection used in the Detroit SAK Action Research Project.

Evaluation: Systematic investigation of the process or outcomes of a particular program or endeavor.[374]

False Reporting/False Rape Allegation: An untruthful accusation of rape that research finds occurs in only 2-10% of all reported rape cases.

Fight, Flight, or Freeze: Human responses to a perceived threat or traumatic event. "Fight" refers to experiencing feelings like anger and an impulse to hit or otherwise become violent. "Flight" refers to feelings of anxiety, and an impulse to flee or otherwise remove oneself from the threat. "Freeze" refers to feeling stuck or frozen, and can include a sense of dread or restricted breathing.[375]

Focus Groups: Structured group discussions led by one or two facilitators.

Forensic Evidence: Physical evidence collected that can be examined scientifically to help with the investigation and prosecution of a crime.[376]

Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI): A research-based technique designed to maximize the accuracy of the information-gathering process by taking into account trauma's effect on the brain, such as memory impairment and how traumatized memories are stored, with a focus on allowing the victim to lead the interview. [377]

Forensic Scientists: Specialists who analyze forensic evidence and provide results to investigators and/or prosecutors. They may respond to crime scenes to assist in the collection and processing of evidence as well as give testimony at trial regarding the results of their analysis.[378]

Frequency: In statistics, how often a response occurs.

Gender Identity: "A person's deeply-felt, inherent sense of being [a man, a woman, or another gender, such as genderqueer or non-binary] that may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth."[379]

Hippocampus: The brain structure thought to be crucial to memory processing.[380]

HPA Axis: This describes the 3 glands that release certain hormones and chemicals: the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the adrenal gland. The activation of these glands, and resulting release of hormones, affect victim behavior. [381]

Hyper Affect: A possible consequence of experiencing trauma that can include feeling or presenting with manic or elevated mood, over-activity, and agitation.[382]

Implicit Bias: The unconscious or ingrained prejudices that people may hold. Although someone may consciously hold un-biased beliefs, implicit biases may affect their behavior towards certain groups and individuals. [383]

Institutional Review Board (IRB): An administrative body, typically at an institution of higher education, tasked with overseeing research involving human subjects and protecting the rights of participants.[384]

Interviews: One-on-one discussions with professionals, victims, or other stakeholders. Interviews can be structured (proceed from a set script of questions), semi-structured (include some questions but can progress naturally), or unstructured (open-ended and free form).

Justice Advocate: A person hired by a victim notification initiative to serve as an advocate for the victim in connecting them to governmental and community resources and facilitating interactions with the justice system. Sometimes called a "system-based advocate."[385]

Juvenile Cases: In this report, a juvenile is considered a person age 15 or younger who is not emancipated. This definition may vary between jurisdictions, states, or agencies. [386]

Limbic System: The limbic system describes a group of brain structures that regulate emotional response, including flight or fight reactions. It is made up of the thalamus, hypothalamus, hippocampus, and amygdala.[387]

Logic Models: An outline of the program's resources/inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Mandated Reporting: Depending on a person's occupation, role in a system, or the age of a victim they are serving, they may be required by law to report certain incidents or information to law enforcement (e.g., child abuse).[388]

Mean: The average of the data. The sum of a set of numbers divided by the quantity. In this guide, the sum or responses divided by the number of responses.

Median: The middle number of a data set when numbers are arranged from smallest to largest.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Written agreements that list concerted expectations between two or more parties that are collaborating toward a common goal.[389]

Memory Consolidation: Process by which new information is converted to long-term memory.[390]

Memory Fragmentation: Often resulting from experiences of trauma, this is a disruption to the typical sequence or content of memories.[391]

Mode: The most frequently occurring response in a data set.

Multidisciplinary Response: A response that involves actors from several different professions. In the context of victim notification, a multidisciplinary response may include social service providers, advocates, law enforcement representatives, attorneys, and community representatives.[392]

Needs Assessment: Explores the extent of a problem, considers barriers, prioritizes needs, and identifies available resources and interventions to address those needs.[393]

Neurobiology of Trauma: The chemical and hormonal reactions that occur in the brain in response to trauma.[394]

Non-Reporting Sexual Assault Kits (NR-SAKs): Sexual assault kits collected from an adult victim who has chosen not to report their assault to law enforcement.[395]

Observation: Researchers attend routine activities of the group they are studying to watch and gather information without direct interaction.[396]

Office on Violence Against Women (OVW): An office in the U.S. Department of Justice charged with providing federal leadership in national capacity development to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and improve services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.[397]

Open-Ended Questions: Questions that do not have yes or no answers and inspire critical thinking and layered responses.[398]

Operationalize: Determine how to define and measure a variable or outcome for research or evaluation.[399]

Opt-In Notification: Victim notification initiatives that create outreach campaigns to alert the community that backlogged SAKs are in the process of being tested. Victims can choose whether or not to be alerted about developments in their cases. [400]

Outcome Evaluation: A method to determine whether the program met its stated outcomes. [401] [402]

Oxytocin: A hormone produced by the hypothalamus that promotes positive feelings and social behaviors. Sometimes called the "love hormone." [403]

Personal Readiness for Change: An individual's capacity for change, willingness to change, and ability to facilitate change in their context. Personal readiness for change may be affected both by personal values and beliefs and how much time they have available to dedicate to making change.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A mental health condition following exposure to a traumatic event characterized by a range of symptoms including changes in arousal, such as: hypervigilance (chronic alert state) and difficulties with sleep or concentration; nightmares, flashbacks (reliving the event) and other intrusive thoughts; avoidance behaviors; and negative changes in thoughts or mood such as negative views of self and others and lack of trust in others. [404]

Pre-Frontal Cortex: The region at the forefront of the brain that is thought to be responsible for major functions like, "complex cognitive behaviors, working memory, attention, expression of personality, and appropriate social behavior." [405]

Primary Victimization: The initial or precipitating assault that was committed against the victim.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): An act passed in 2003 to provide resources, information, and research support to understand and eliminate prison rape. [406]

Procedural Justice: The concept of fair treatment and equitable practices in the process of conflict resolution. This idea can be applied in the criminal justice system and in many other formalized settings. [407]

Process Evaluation: A method to assess how a program functions to determine whether activities and outputs occurred as intended.[408]

Program Evaluation: A method to determine the impact and effectiveness of a program, initiative, or services, and implement empirically based improvements. [409]

Purposeful Sampling: This is a targeted method of participant recruitment, when you are interested in a very specific group with a narrowly defined combination of attributes and experiences. [410]

Qualitative Data: Words that come from interviews, focus groups, observation reports, secondary data analysis, and possibly some items on surveys. This type of data is used to highlight themes or recurring ideas.

Quantitative Data: The resulting numbers from closed-ended survey questions, ratings made in observation reports, or statistics in secondary data sources that can be analyzed via statistical methods.

Racial Bias: Holding specific views or opinions that result in unfair treatment of someone based on their race.

Range: The difference between the highest occurring data point and the lowest occurring data point for one question.

Rape Myth: A set of attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and values that are usually incorrect, but broadly accepted and promote male sexual aggression toward women. Different myths may: integrate and result in victim-blaming; be used to excuse perpetrators of responsibility; minimize the rape trauma; and support a culture that tolerates rape at both the individual and institutional levels.

Reid Technique of Interviewing: A traditional law enforcement questioning or interview technique used for recounting an incident that proceeds in a chronological fashion and does not account for the way that traumatic memories are encoded and stored in the brain. This type of interview technique may result in victims feeling judged or blamed.

Resiliency: The ability of an individual or an organization to "bounce back" from adverse or traumatic events, experiences, or other stressors. Resiliency is not the lack of negative emotional experiences or responses, but rather it is the broader thoughts, behaviors, and actions displayed in response to these experiences. Building resilience involves multiple factors – personal, community, organization, cultural, and relational. Some characteristics of resilient individuals and organizations include having emotionally supportive and diverse social connections, being flexible, practicing self care, and the ability to take action towards goals (when possible). Many studies show that resilience is not something that one has or does not have, but that it can be cultivated and learned.

Re-Traumatization: The reactivation of traumatic responses through an event or experience that can cause an individual to feel the traumatic stress as intensely as they did during the initial trauma. After a significant period of time has elapsed, individuals may not recognize that their current emotional response is related to their initial traumatic event.

Re-Victimization: A subsequent sexual assault that occurs, or is disclosed, after the report of the primary assault. Someone may disclose a re-victimization during the process of notification on the initial assault.

SAFER Act (2013): The Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act of 2013 is an effort to audit and test untested SAK inventories. It provided funding to test SAKs or improve labs, tasked the FBI with crafting protocols to improve the testing and

processing of DNA evidence, and provided training and technical assistance to jurisdictions. [411]

Sampling: The process of selecting a subset of individuals from the population of interest for evaluation or other investigative inquiry (intervention, surveys, interviewing, etc.). The goal of sampling is to obtain a group that is representative of the larger population from which it is drawn so that any findings can be generalized back to that population. When sampling, one must always be mindful of potential bias that impacts the ability to infer characteristics about the larger population from the sample used.

Secondary Data Analysis: Reviewing and analyzing existing data.

Secondary Victimization: Negative experiences victims encounter following the assault, often due to victim-blaming and shaming, perpetrated by friends or family as well as the community systems the survivor comes into contact with after the initial victimization.[412]

Sentinel Event: A NIJ concept describing a negative event that occurs in a complex system, like the criminal justice system that is seen, not as the failing of one person or institution, but understood as caused by a systemic flaw. [413]

Serial Offender: Perpetrators who have a pattern of committing sexual assault/violence against multiple individuals over time.

Sexual Assault: The Texas Penal Code defines sexual assault as someone that intentionally or knowingly causes the penetration of the anus, sexual organ, or mouth by any means, without the person's consent, or causes the sexual organ of another person, without that person's consent, to contact or penetrate the mouth, anus, or sexual organ of another person.

Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE): "An examination of a sexual assault patient by a health care provider, ideally one who has specialized training and clinical experience in the collection of forensic evidence and treatment of those patients. The examination includes: gathering information from the patient for the medical forensic history; an examination; coordinating treatment of injuries; documentation of biological and physical findings; collection of evidence from the patient; documentation of findings; information, treatment and referrals for STIs, pregnancy, suicidal ideation, alcohol and substance abuse, and other non-acute medical concerns; and follow-up as needed to provide additional healing, treatment, or collection of evidence."[414]

Sexual Assault Kit (SAK): A national protocol recommended to collect evidence of sexual assault from victims. Each kit includes: a container, instructions/checklists, and evidence collection equipment as required by the appropriate crime laboratory. Types of evidence that can be collected includes: clothing; foreign materials on the body, hair (e.g., head and pubic hair samples and combings); oral and anogenital swabs and smears; body swabs; and blood, urine, and saliva samples for possible alcohol/drug screening, toxicology testing, and DNA analysis. Each kit also contains instructions on maintaining the chain of custody for evidence collected.[415]

Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI): A grant program administered by the BJA that provides grant funding to address unsubmitted SAKs through: inventorying and testing SAKs; supporting investigation, prosecution, and victim services; developing evidence tracking systems; providing training to law enforcement; conducting research on sexual assault cases; and increasing DNA upload to CODIS.[416]

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE): Registered nurses who receive specialized education and fulfill clinical requirements to perform sexual assault forensic exams. SANEs have specific knowledge, skills, and training in victim-centered approaches.

Sexual Assault Response Team (SART): The standard delivery system or multidisciplinary team used to provide services to victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Sexual Minority: A person who identifies as non-heterosexual, experiences sexual attraction to people of the same gender, or identifies are a minority gender (such as those who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth).[417] Sexual minority individuals may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, or another orientation.

Sleep Cycle: The cyclical pattern in which individuals move through different stages of sleep (e.g. rapid-eye-movement sleep, non-rapid-eye-movement sleep).[418]

Snowball Sampling: A sampling technique useful for when the population of interest is isolated or difficult to reach. Researchers ask current participants for names of other members of the population of interest who may want to participate.[419]

Standard Deviation: Measure of variation in answers or measuring how different most answers are from the mean.

Statute of Limitations: A law limiting the amount of time that civil claims or criminal charges can be pursued following an injury.[420]

Surveys: Structured tools for data collection with standard questions that are typically conducted over the phone, by mail, or online. Surveys can be self-paced or can be led by the person conducting the survey. Researchers or evaluators conducting a

survey should strive for a sample that is representative of the population of interest.[421]

SWOT Analysis: A planning tool that analyzes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for an organization or proposed course of action.[422]

System-Based Advocate: A professional who supports victims by offering information, emotional support, and help finding resources as well as by coordinating further contact between victims and law enforcement. May also be called justice advocates, victim service providers, victim/witness coordinators, or victim/witness specialists.[423] System-based advocates are typically employed by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor's office and cannot offer confidentiality to victims.[424] See also **community-based advocate**.

Tertiary Victimization: The type of victimization that occurs when there is a lack or presence of something at the societal level,[425] such as delayed evidence testing and subsequent notification.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: The gender equity law that prohibits gender discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding. [426]

Tonic Immobility: A biological response to trauma known as rape-induced paralysis that is characterized by a complete shut-down of the body.

Trauma Reaction: A neurobiological response to experiences of trauma, or the physical or behavioral outcome of that neurobiological response.

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC): For the purpose of this guide, an approach to sexual assault that: recognizes the wide-ranging impact of trauma as well as potential paths to recovery; understands the signs and symptoms of trauma in individuals, families, and community members involved in systems addressing sexual assault; takes steps to integrate evidence-based knowledge on trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to prevent re-traumatization.

Unsubmitted Forensic Evidence: Forensic evidence, including SAKs, that has not yet been submitted by law enforcement to a crime lab for testing.[427]

Victim: For the purpose of this guide, any individual who experiences a sexual assault victimization.[428]

Victim-Blaming: When victims are held responsible for their own assaults, or it is implied that they somehow brought it on themselves. For example, suggesting that the victim's clothes provoked the assault or they were "asking for it."

Victim-Centered: Describes an approach or practice that recognizes that sexual assault victims are "central participants in the medical forensic exam process and they deserve timely, compassionate, respectful, and appropriate care. Victims have the right to be fully informed in order to make their own decisions about participation in all components of the exam process. Responders need to do all that is possible to explain possible options, the consequences of choosing one option over another, and available resources as well as support victims in their choices." A systematic focus and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of the sexual assault victim/survivor from initial contact onward to ensure uncritical, comprehensive, and compassionate delivery of services. This framework places the safety, requests, and well-being of the victim in the forefront of all matters and procedures.[429]

Victim Notification: The process of notifying a victim on the details or progression of their case through the criminal justice system (e.g., prosecution decisions or offender custody status). In the context of this guide, this primarily refers to the process of notifying a victim of the results of their SAK after forensic scientists have tested it.

Working Group: A multidisciplinary group of individuals or agencies that commit resources and time towards collaborating on a common project or goal. Members of the working group may come from varying personal or professional backgrounds and, therefore, have different goals or objectives, but they should strive to work together to improve system responses to sexual assaults. Working groups gather in person to discuss successes, failures, and areas of improvement, as well as to share ideas.

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