



# Sexual Assault

## DEMONSTRATION INITIATIVE

### Enhancing Sexual Assault Services

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#### SADI PROJECT SITES

### A new chapter begins

**T**he new year marks a new chapter for SADI Project Sites. Phase One of the Initiative, where SADI Project Sites completed community and organizational assessments, is complete and Project Sites each have an Individualized Response Plan (IRP). Equipped with the IRP, Project Sites are now focused on implementing the services and activities that they designed to meet the needs their communities expressed during the assessment process.

This edition of the SADI eNewsletter shows how your organization can listen to the communities and use this information to shape community-driven sexual assault services. Learn more about how SADI Project Sites engaged in the community assessment process and access tools designed to help organizations conduct their own community assessments.

#### WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

“Our organization found that many people in our community wanted us to spread the word about sexual assault and survivor services by talking to youth in schools.”

– SafePlace in Washington

**INSIDE:** See what SADI sites learned; Check out the quotes featured in this eNewsletter.





## MORE ABOUT SADI

The Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative (SADI) is this first large-scale project to dedicate resources, support and replicable tools for dual/multiservice programs who want to enhance services for sexual assault survivors.

### National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

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### Resource Sharing Project (RSP)

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## LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

# Making things better

What do people in your community think about sexual violence? How do people hear about your services? How do people in other systems respond when survivors disclose to them? When do community partners refer people to your agency and when don't they? During the first phase of the SADI, each of the sites carried out a community assessment to answers these types of questions and more.

Programs providing services to sexual assault survivors are likely to have the skills to conduct community assessments, but are often challenged with finding the time. Tools developed with the SADI sites will support programs in reaching out to community members and enhancing assessment skills. With people who are curious, detail oriented, can see the big picture, are good at prioritizing tasks, and who want to develop new skills, many programs can benefit from doing similar assessments in their own communities.

The SADI project community assessments were developed uniquely for each site. Although many of the assessments used the same methodologies and asked similar questions, it was important that they were tailored to each site – what they wanted to learn, how they wanted to use what they learned, who they needed to hear from, and how they wanted to engage in dialogue with their communities.

Sites started by brainstorming and then prioritizing what they wanted to learn from the assessment. The emphasis was on how they might use what they learned. Thinking about use from the beginning increases the chances that you will collect relevant information. With those priorities in mind, they identified who they needed to hear from in the community. The people they identified included community partners they currently collaborated with, community leaders with whom they did not yet have a relationship, community members, and survivors of sexual violence. Finally, each site determined what the best way was to engage with the groups they had identified. Different methods were used for different groups, depending on factors such as community history, culture, levels of trust, and past experiences. Knowing what they wanted to learn, who they wanted to listen to, and what approach would build the greatest level of trust, specific methods



“Sexual violence is a community problem so it needs a community solution. That means more than just our agency needs to be ready to respond.”



such as interviews, focus groups, and community surveys were developed.

When asked about what the community assessment experience was like, site staff acknowledged that it took a lot of time and effort – and that it was worth it! Most importantly, they did not see the assessment as separate from the actual work of enhancing sexual assault services. The assessment was part of doing the work. As one staff member said, “The assessment really is the intervention.” For example, in one community the program was doing a community survey and invited a group of police detectives to take part in it. A few hours later, the detectives called the program and asked if someone could come over

and talk with them. They spent a couple of hours talking about their reactions to the survey, which included being shocked by how many things they were uncertain about. That led to the program doing an all-day training with the detectives.

Each site learned important things about their community. They used what they learned to develop their plans to enhance sexual assault services. Some common themes emerged across many of the sites.

Community members need to be aware of sexual violence within their own communities. While

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## LISTENING: Continued from Page 4

staff of sexual assault programs anticipated silence and misunderstandings around sexual violence, they were still surprised by how deep it ran and the ways it was impacting survivors' accessing support services. For example, sites that spoke with survivors heard about the silence survivors felt in their communities and the lack of understanding they found when they disclosed their experiences to others in the community. This knowledge is helping programs focus their training and collaborative efforts. Sites also found that community leaders and members want information that is more specific to their communities. National prevalence data are too remote to be a powerful catalyst for changing beliefs. This can be a challenge because in our field we usually do not have good sources of local prevalence data. However, the SADI sites are working on ways to make information about sexual violence more relevant to their communities.

Community partners must be prepared to support survivors. Time and again, sites expressed the importance of community partners. They came to see their partners not only as referral sources, but as needing to be mobilized to provide their own responses to sexual violence. As one executive director explained, "Sexual violence is a community problem so it needs a community solution. That means more than just our agency needs to be ready to respond." Some of the needs identified included:

- Policies and procedures for making referrals so community partners know when and how to connect survivors and their loved ones to the sexual assault program
- Strategies for maintaining confidentiality across systems including training community partners on the importance of confidentiality for survivors
- Training community partners on how to respond

For example, in one community the program was doing a community survey and invited a group of police detectives to take part in it. A few hours later, the detectives called the program and asked if someone could come over and talk with them. They spent a couple of hours talking about their reactions to the survey, which included being shocked by how many things they were uncertain about. That led to the program doing an all-day training with the detectives.

to disclosures and helping them think about how they can provide support to survivors in their own roles and capacities.

There can also be a surprising depth of interest and commitment to making things better. Many of the sites were surprised by how passionately people in their communities felt about sexual violence. Even when they lacked accurate knowledge, they wanted to see things change. Some of the project sites anticipated silence or criticism, but instead found new partners who were willing to help. This realization was encouraging and energizing. It is far easier to engage in community change when you know the community supports the need for change.

Sexual assault services are often invisible. All the SADI sites knew from the start of the project that their other services were better known in the community. The most common issues are that shelter services are tangible, easy to understand and easy to make in-kind donations to. Consequently, many people equate the programs solely with shelter.

For example, some community leaders said they were aware the program served survivors of sexual violence and that if a survivor needed shelter, they would refer them. However, if they did not need shelter, then the assumption was that there were no services available for them. Understanding what community members and leaders think they know

about their programs is helping SADI sites strategize specific ways to become more visible. This includes reviewing their written and online materials to ensure they adequately describe all services, including sexual assault support.

Long-term support is critical. Dual programs are often more experienced with meeting immediate crisis needs. For survivors of sexual violence, this usually means medical and legal advocacy in the first hours or days following an assault. However, the sites learned that just as we see in research, in their communities most survivors reach out for help much later. Therefore, sexual assault support must also emphasize long-term support services. Based on what they learned, sites are in the process of developing many innovative approaches to those services. In addition to traditional counseling and therapy, they are also exploring the potential of other healing modalities such as the expressive arts, craft circles, trauma-informed yoga, nature walks, and equine therapy. It is important that such efforts fit what the community is comfortable with and what is consistent with their culture.

By having listened closely to their communities, SADI sites can make decisions that are informed by their communities, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be well received and meet the needs of survivors.



RESOURCES

# Interested in how your organization can hear from your community?

The *Listening to Our Communities: Assessment Toolkit* has been created to assist sexual assault services agencies develop strong, community-specific sexual assault services. To download a copy of the toolkit, visit <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-toolkits/listening-our-communities-assessment-toolkit>. Below are the components of the toolkit along with their URL:



1. *Listening to Our Communities: A Fact Sheet on Community Assessments*

This fact sheet provides answers to frequently asked questions about community assessment work.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-fact-sheets/listening-our-communities-community-assessment>



2. *Listening To Our Communities: Guide on Data Analysis*

This guide includes tips for analyzing interviews and groups to make sure that community stories are captured effectively.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/listening-our-communities-data-analysis>



3. *Listening To Our Communities: Guide for Focus Groups*

This guide includes tips for conducting focus groups specific to sexual violence to make sure that community stories are gathered effectively.

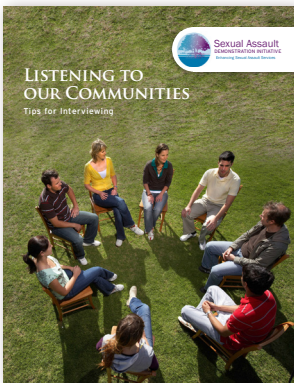
<http://nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/listening-our-communities-focus-groups>



4. *Listening to Our Communities: Sample Interview Guide*

This sample interview guide is intended to help shape the community interview process. Interviews are a tool for assessment work and this guide provides an approach to use community leader interviews as conversations with a purpose. You are welcome to use or adapt to your community needs.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/listening-our-communities-sample-interview-guide>



5. *Listening to Our Communities: Tips for Interviewing*

This guide includes a framework for using interviews, balancing interviewing with advocacy, key strategies to consider when focusing on sexual assault issues and information on how to summarize the information gathered.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-guides/listening-our-communities-tips-interviewing>

Please see **TOOLKIT** on Page 8

## WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

“We were greatly encouraged by the results of our assessment. We learned that our community *wants* to hear directly from survivors. Their testimonials give hope that help is available and that healing can happen. We anticipate this will empower survivors and combat community silencing.”

– The DOVES Program in Nebraska

“Agencies in NYC serving the Asian Pacific Islander community work in silos. There is inadequate conversation amongst them to give the communities they serve holistic/rounded information to serve the communities diverse needs. Survivors expressed interest in seeking the wide range of services, including case management, advocacy, and counseling.” – New York Asian Women’s Center (NYAWC) in New York







The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape created the **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)** in 2000 to identify, create and disseminate resources to assist those working throughout the country to address and prevent all forms of sexual violence. NSVRC identifies sexual violence as a public health, social justice, and human rights issue, and collaborates with experts using a variety of strategies, to create a culture free from sexual violence, and one that responds appropriately and compassionately to survivors. NSVRC believes that through collaboration, prevention, and research-based resources, we are making the world safer and healthier.

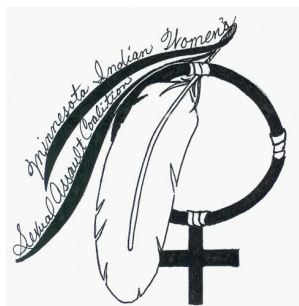


**The National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project (RSP)**, a collaborative project of Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault,

and Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, works to end sexual violence and increase services available to sexual violence survivors by developing tools, providing technical assistance and training, and otherwise assisting rape crisis centers and state, tribal and territorial sexual assault coalitions. The RSP provides technical assistance, support, and the dissemination of peer-driven resources for all state and territorial sexual assault coalitions, SASP administrators, and Rural Grantees that are dual/multi-service advocacy agencies. Through deep connections to coalitions, service providers, and survivors, the RSP is at the cutting edge of identifying emerging issues, advancing promising practices, and synthesizing the voices and experiences across the nation into coherent best practice models.



**National Organization of Asian Pacific Islander Ending Sexual Violence (NAPIESV)** is a national organization established by Asian and Pacific Islander anti-sexual assault advocates to give voice to the experiences of Asian and Pacific Islander women and girls who are victims of sexual assault. NAPIESV's goal is to provide technical assistance to culturally and linguistically specific organizations that are currently serving or attempting to serve victims of sexual assault in Asians and Pacific Islander communities.



**The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition** is a statewide membership tribal coalition, and a national technical assistance provider; working to end sexual violence against Native women and children. Our membership is comprised of advocates and others who are working to end violence in Native communities in Minnesota, and include Native and non-Native; male and female, individual and organizational members. We provide technical assistance to the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program grantees nationwide to develop, enhance, or strengthen their sexual assault services. Our vision is to: Create Safety and Justice Through the Teachings of Our Grandmothers.