

Orientation to a Think Aloud observation session

A “Think Aloud” process is often used to get quick and immediate feedback from someone about a tool or instrument, such as a survey. The process described in this document is for the purpose of gathering information about the protocol, process, and set of procedures used during a sexual assault case by various responders. Some of the potential benefits of using this method during shadowing or observation with a SART colleague:

- It can provide feedback regarding sexual assault protocols or other steps or guidelines developed by the SART.
- It provides an opportunity for a SART member to hear directly from a colleague in a different role how they think about sexual assault cases while in the process of responding.
- It will likely take the observer deeper into the details of the response process than a structured interview might.
- It is a highly flexible process that allows the observer to take the conversation in different useful directions, though the observer should be cautious not to shift the conversation away from the task at hand.
- It provides the chance for meaningful dialogue and exchange related to the SART protocols and work between colleagues that can lead to valuable insights.

Tips for making the process useful

- It’s important that the observer clarify that s/he is trying to learn about the process, what it looks like, and how to improve the system response. The colleague’s handling of a sexual assault case is not under scrutiny.
- The colleague being shadowed should be encouraged at all times to comment on his/her actions, intentions, and thoughts.
- It’s important that the colleague is relaxed, at ease, and not feeling judged or tested.
- The observer should be jotting quick notes about things s/he wants to remember or come back to.

Question prompts

- Can you tell me what you are thinking now?
- What led you to do that?
- What is that used for?
- How do you decide what to include in the report?
- What goes into the decision about what format to use?
- What tells you what is the most important next step? Adapted by S. Haas from “Think-Aloud Protocol Guidelines for Use Evaluations of Surveys” developed by Roberta Gibbons, Metropolitan State University, and “Methods for successful ‘Thinking-Out-Loud’ procedures” developed by Judy Ramey, University of Washington.

Are We Making a Difference? Sexual Assault Response Teams Assessing Systems Change (p. 72) by Emily Goff, Sharon Haas, Laura Pejsa, and Jessica Jerney, 2015. Retrieved from

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