

**Latino Networking Group Teleconference**  
**Preventing Sexual Violence**  
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**Present:**

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**Introduction to the Issue and BARCC**

- Purpose: to offer a grassroots approach to preventing sexual assault, and promoting healthy development for adolescents.
- This is a big picture presentation of what's happening in our communities and how you can help to keep adolescents safe.
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) – located in Cambridge, MA. We see survivors of sexual assault and violence. I am the adolescent clinician and work with girls and boys 12-19 years old.
  - BARCC Provides free services; including a hotline; therapy; group counseling; workshops for survivors, parents, and extended family. This is not just the survivor's problem; there is a ripple effect in community.
  - The people we see range from young people, to people in their 70's and 80's first disclosing about years of abuse.
  - We help survivors know their rights, dispatch an advocate to ensure rights are protected they're getting the medical care they need, provide legal advocacy, and community awareness and prevention services.
  - We provide first responder training for educators, legal teams, and the medical community.
  - We have a big picture philosophy. BARCC is over 30 yrs old, and started as grassroots initiative. We use an empowerment model—everyone has the right to be safe and make individual choices
  - We help survivors get back control in their lives and out of the immediate crisis situation.
- This is difficult with adolescents, because some things impede them from communicating. We help them navigate language and define their experience with them, not for them. We draw concrete connections between law and their experience.
- MA has all encompassing definitions for rape, consent, harassment, etc. We educate them, but let them make connections.

**Myths & Facts**

- It's important to listen to the adolescent's ideas about the situation. Tease out fact from fiction, and help them gain a true understanding of what happened.
- There are societal ideas about who rapes, who gets raped, and when and why it happens. Help them understand that this is a crime.

- It's easy for an adult to jump to conclusions and blame the victim in a panic situation when we don't feel in control (e.g. why were you out late, drinking, etc). It's easy to blame someone else because we feel like we would have to blame ourselves.
- Rape is always the perpetrators fault; it's never ok for something to happen without expressed consent, but the line is blurry. However, the victim was never asking for it or should have known better. The survivor is responsible for themselves and not how someone else behaves.
- TV, movies, and the media show harmful stereotypes about who rapes/gets raped, including people of color, lesser means, uneducated.
- Facts are that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be survivors of sexual abuse before age 18. 91% of victims are female. Teens ages 16 -19 are more likely to be victims of assault. 44% under age 18, 15% under 12.
- In grades 5-12, over 40% boys and 29% girls told no one about sexual abuse.
- Only 25% of cases are stranger assaults. 75% are acquaintance rapes. 80% of rapes happen in the home. This is coming from home, schools, coaches, and adolescent relationships with children.
- 90% of men who rape other men identify as heterosexual. Gay men raping is a socially constructed stereotype.
- 90% of rapes occur with someone of the same racial or ethnic background. It's often intimate partner violence. This goes against the myth of large minority men assaulting white women.
- Rape isn't about sex. How do we draw line? How do we show them that they have power to stop something once it has begun? Societal views are that sex equals gratification, mixed messages are ok, sex is exciting, and there are muddled lines between sex and violence. However, it is really about power and control. Rape is the weapon in a violent exchange.
- Another myth is that people lie about being raped to get revenge or attention. Adolescents don't want to be seen as outliers or snitches, and are more likely to underreport. Rape has the lowest incidence of false reporting of any crime.
- Survivors often recant stories because they are abused again or humiliated; families see them as a disgrace; they are talked about on MySpace. Most crimes aren't prosecuted, and very few perpetrators are convicted. Societal attitude is that unless I can see it, (i.e. broken bones), then it didn't happen. DAs and police have their own agendas. This is tough on survivors. They have to retell their story; every time is retrigger, and they are met with difficult questions and disbelief. Sometimes they feel like recanting is the only alternative.

### **Prevention Strategies**

- How do we prepare ourselves to help keep communities safe? Create a safe, non-judgmental environment where kids can ask questions, and share knowledge related to sex ed and violence awareness. Kids always tell me they wish they had a real sex ed class like the one I give them.
- Kids want to talk about sex responsibly but don't always know how. It's easy for adults to panic, be concerned, or feel awkward when a young person asks questions.
  - You may want to say "Are you crazy? Don't do it!" etc., but this is hard for a young person to hear. As long as they are safe, don't cut them off.
  - Ask questions about their stories.
  - Tell them, "can imagine how hard that is, why don't you tell me more; why don't you tell me what you do as a response to x? How do you help yourself when you're scared? Where do you get your information? Is it working for you? I'm really glad you brought this to me." It can sound contrived, but if you are calm and sincere, they will open up.
  - You don't need to get down to their level, but they need to know they're safe and we have power to give that to them. They need correct information about sex ed (HIV, STDs, healthy sexual habits, taking care of their bodies/minds).

- I see people who are involved in sex work and don't even know it. People trade sex to settle a football score, favors, dinner, and money. Ask what they're getting from it.
- Once you've created this environment, it's important to address society's social constructs of stereotypes race, and gender discrimination. Make connections between media, marketing, consumerism, race, class culture, and sexual violence. Examine what they're exposed to – don't shame them but understand what they're getting from it and how their behavior is affected.
- Examine the language they use. Kids are sometimes uncomfortable identifying body parts in a way that's anatomically correct. Help them to use language to remove ambiguity and help them feel satisfied. Challenge their slang and ask them what it means (e.g. hooking up). Give them the tools to explain what they mean.
- Understand the dynamics of power in the kid's life. What role do you play? Who has the power? Can you create equity? If someone feels powerless in an intimate relationship, they are vulnerable.
- Validate their feelings, whether it's confusion, stress, or others. Don't lecture them about adult stress. Feeling emotional is ok, as long as it isn't directed towards negative behavior (e.g. fights, drinking, drugs).
- Incorporate role playing – kids are dying to use their skills. Give them a place to shine and let their guard down. They can create, present, and write; incorporate what they know. Use music, and technology; find out what websites they use.
- Tell kids legal definition of rape, consent, etc. Many teens think it's cool to date someone twice their age. This is illegal and it sets a precedent for the rest of their lives. Find a way to expose why it's not ok without shaming her, because the first thing she'll do is run to the boyfriend. Get political; advocate for policy change. How can you make sure a kid's voice is heard? Build bridges into the community.
- Peer pressure is high—talking to a kid one-on-one is your chance to build a relationship. Work with them to create an “out” strategy. Identify the supports in their lives and create relationships with them. Build self esteem based on their talents. Find hobbies that challenge gender expectations, and find an organization who can help the kid pursue this. Never promise anything except that you will do your best.

### **Rape Trauma Syndrome**

- This is natural reaction for an abnormal event. There are many different kinds of reactions. (Slide 18)
- If kid does not self disclose but you see many warning signs, which should be a catalyst for conversation.
- Outward adjustment phase (3-6 months after): they are trying to gain control over being rape victim. Many times they use self-inflicted harm.
- One year anniversary – retrigger, experience emotions again, and are upset that they can't move on.

### **Intervention Strategies**

- The goal for any mandated reporter (anyone who has an immediate disclosure) is to intervene and make the connection to safety.
- We use acronym SEEK – Safety, Empowerment, Empathy, Knowledge.
  - Reduce shame, keep confidentiality. This is different from other crimes—don't want to announce publicly. Immediate physical and emotional concerns.
  - Empowerment: help survivor understand guidelines around confidentiality and reporting. Be concrete with options and the law. Let survivor guide conversation. Use empowering, concrete, non-hostile language.

- Help them to understand what they are feeling emotionally. Let them know that you can relate to their emotions. Think about how you handled situation when you felt out of control and how you handled it.
- Help them understand how to get more information. Are they concerned about pregnancy? How do they find safe, community resources? Do they need help talking to a parent/guardian? Praise them for their bravery and show how it solidifies their relationship. Know your role. Believe and empower them.
- Put together your own toolkit at your calmest, so you can be calm when situation happens—these are things I should ask, these are my resources /hotline numbers, these are words I'm comfortable using.
- Survivors are never to blame.
- Responsibility doesn't fall on one person – use spiritual leaders, community orgs, family, etc.
- In Boston, if someone needs medical attention, there are nurses and medical advocates who specialize in working with survivors, and do evidence collection, pregnancy, toxicology screening, STDs. Look into appropriate health centers for kids, and who will treat adolescents without parental consent.
- You can report, restraining orders, police can get involved.
- Remember to take care of yourself.

### **Schools Taking Action**

- Abandon “not in my town” mentality.
- Create alliances with youth serving agencies, reexamine existing ones.
- Work with families, what are their needs?

### **Questions**

**Allison:** I work with 11-16 year-olds in a middle school. Sometimes girls don't realize they've been raped. They can't label it, maybe they've been coerced. There are situations where a boy is rough or violent, and they have sex as a way of calming him down. Is there a definition that demonstrates that you don't have to be held down to be raped?

**Stacy:** Culture of sex – way for young people to get what they want/need on both sides. Look at it in the context of teen culture. They don't use language to set boundaries because if they don't perform, it may lead to violence, being ostracized, or harassed. Girls are still taught that finding an emotional connection with someone means love, and when you love someone, you do whatever it takes to keep emotional security, love, attention, popularity, and perks. The guy could be older and show her life she wouldn't know otherwise. She could be undocumented and guy threatens to expose her, or gay and the partner threatens to expose. Take it back to power dynamic—this isn't mutually gratifying, consensual sex – this is horrific display of power, control, and domination.

**Stacy:** The CDC has 6 prevention campaigns running. These models are used primarily within schools. There are educational videos that expose gender stereotypes, racism, and their relationships to society and to sexual violence. They also talk about the media and music.