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Barriers to Criminal Justice System and Victim Services Collaboration

Sexual Assault Response Teams have typically been created to improve services for victims while improving the collection of evidence needed to hold sex offenders accountable for their violent crimes. Although, a variety of models exist throughout the country, members of the “response” team typically include law enforcement, a forensic examiner and advocacy. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of research and program evaluation to assess our successes, failures and areas needing improvement. As an example, because of the high proportion of sexual assaults perpetrated by non-strangers, the lack of appropriate training for law enforcement about the benefits and guidelines for a forensic examination, the nature of many of the offenses, and the delay in reporting to authorities, most victims will not receive a forensic examination. However, many communities only activate SART when a forensic examination is warranted. Therefore, the team response and community collaboration is often denied to those who may need the services most. This session will discuss best practices for sexual assault response teams while exploring a number of barriers to effective collaboration.

At the conclusion of the session, participants will have an understanding of the:

- Various patrol responses to sexual assault
- Responsibilities of the first responding officer
- Benefits of a multi-disciplinary response and promising practices
- Need to review protocols to make sure they are real to practitioners
- Challenges and barriers to the criminal justice system and victim services collaboration
- Traits of collaborating teams
- Role of the advocate from the point of the initial contact to possible sentencing
- Guidelines for obtaining forensic sexual assault examinations for both victims and suspects
- Role of the prosecuting attorney
- Need to redefine a “successful” investigation