

Palm Beach County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)

Protocol for Members of PBC SART

The primary objectives of the SART are to improve the treatment of survivors, case outcomes, efficiency and protection of the community by creating a victim centered response.

Guiding Principles

- A. Survivors will feel safe and supported reporting sexual assault as they experience a professional community responding effectively, efficiently and in collaboration on behalf of themselves, their family, and the public safety.
 - 1. They will hear the abuse condemned as wrong.
 - 2. All team members will express their understanding of the scope and effects of sexual violence.
 - 3. The violation will be acknowledged and empathy expressed for the victim, i.e. that it should not have happened to them and that they did nothing to cause the offender to choose to attack them, etc.
 - 4. Survivors will be empowered to discuss the experience of loss that results from the assault.
 - 5. Survivors will have the right to make a statement about the impact of the crime at sentencing.

- B. Each and every survivor will be treated with compassion and respect.
 - 1. They will not be blamed for their victimization.
 - 2. They will be informed and have access to crisis intervention and support services whenever they are needed.
 - 3. Cultural diversity will be recognized and respected.
 - 4. Friends, family and peers of victims will be given the skills and information they need to provide meaningful support.
 - 5. Survivors will know that they are not to blame for their victimization.
 - 6. They will be kept abreast of the progress of their case through the criminal justice system.
 - 7. They will understand their options for financial restoration, restitution, and reparations.

- C. Survivors will be included as vital participants.
 - 1. They will be consulted about their desired outcome for the case.
 - 2. They will know their statutory rights and how to access them.
 - 3. They will know about the criminal justice system, including key roles, players, responsibilities and procedures.
 - 4. They will receive ongoing information about the status of their case.

5. Information will be provided in a language the survivor can understand.
 6. They will have access to trained advocates throughout the process.
 7. Resources will be provided to enable their participation in the process.
- D. Team members will recognize and support survivors as they assume control over their own lives.
1. Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained whenever possible, and the survivor will be informed before information is shared.
 2. When survivors choose not to continue their legal cases, they will continue to be supported, respected and treated compassionately.
- E. Offenders will be held accountable
1. Community will foster an environment that encourages survivors to report sexual assaults.
 2. Witnesses to sexual assault will report the crimes.
 3. Victim-impact statements will be a standard part of the process.
 4. Suspects will be arrested to prevent further victimization.
 5. Offenders will be incarcerated as appropriate.
- F. All team members will work together effectively
1. Key providers necessary for effective response are active, equal members and include but are not limited to: advocates, law enforcement, healthcare providers, justice systems, other related professions, and institutions.
 2. Long term commitment to a quality protocol development cycle, not just producing a final product.
 3. Relationships among and between members and survivors will be based on equality, democratic principles, dignity and respect for cultural and socio-economic diversity.

Developing Collaboration and Coalition Capacity

A total community response includes collective decision-making and coordinated action in order to effectively mobilize the appropriate professional resources. Through this approach individual jobs become easier, less isolated, more visibly appreciated, supported and accessed. The SART should strive for the following:

- A mission statement that is created and used as a tool, motivator, and reality check throughout the process
- Active, equal and regular involvement of SART team members
- Professional cross-training to develop expertise
- Improving community ability to identify new resources
- Increasing diverse participation
- A diversity of leadership roles, skills, and styles are fostered, valued and shared
- An image of the desired community condition, and who is responsible for what contribution
- Goals to promote discussion, build consensus, balance the ideal with the achievable and bring individuals into the group

Starting the Work Process

A clear understanding of the team's identity and purpose from the beginning greatly accelerates progress by avoiding common obstacles and pitfalls. The following may be helpful when starting a SART:

1. Have a vision of how the system could be, how it ought to respond, where gaps and strengths lie, and the process of forming a coalition.
2. Use an inclusive open approach to learn how others fit in the system, their roles and what they do.
3. Identify areas of competing interests and dissention; use the opportunity to build trust among and between diverse resources.
4. Decide early on how conflict will be managed.
5. Facilitate a round table of as many diverse representatives as present in the community, and listen actively, taking notes and keeping record for the future.
6. Coordinate needs assessments to identify service gaps, widespread problems, and quality improvement opportunities.
7. Define protocol and procedures to clear up roles and increase accountability; formalize agreements in a memorandum of understanding between all agents.
8. Document a flow chart of how client services move through and around the current systems.
9. Set goals and timelines, with regular meetings and personal commitments for at least one year.

Continuous Quality Improvement Process

A long-term commitment to a process that can build a team's skills, purpose, and communication. The following may be helpful when maintaining a SART:

1. Complete and share an inventory of existing services.
2. Complete and share a survivor experience survey.
3. Regularly review and share protocols and procedures.
4. Renew and share interagency agreements.
5. Ensure training and leadership succession processes are in place.
6. Complete, share and apply monitoring regimen.
7. Implement evaluation process.
8. Measure progress by keeping centralized files of coalition activity, preparing accurate minutes, providing brief periodic reports from major initiatives, produce annual reviews, and periodic briefs.

SART members may also serve an important role when a member(s) faces a particularly traumatizing case. Members of the SART are uniquely qualified because of their similar work experiences to empathize and support their colleagues on the SART team.