



RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO

INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

STEPS WORKERS CAN TAKE TO ASSIST VICTIM/SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Because IPSV is largely invisible, and disclosure is not often spontaneous, it is useful for workers to ask a range of behavioural questions to identify and explicitly name IPSV. NOT asking doesn't make a woman safer it may leave her less safe physically, emotionally and sexually.

SILENCE PROLONGS DANGER

ASK

Have you ever had sex when you didn't want to? Has your partner ever done sexually degrading things to you? Have you ever had sex with your partner because he has threatened, pressured, forced, or hurt you? Has your partner ever pressured you in to any sexual activity that you were uncomfortable with? What would happen if you refused sex with your partner? Do you feel safe with your partner?

NAME

Upon disclosure name the behaviour as sexual assault/rape. Where possible use her terminology first. What you call ..., / what you have described from a legal perspective is actually rape/sexual assault and is a crime. Any sexual activity without consent or where consent is forced, or you feel threatened/pressured to participate is a sex crime.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Acknowledge her feelings, the difficulty in speaking about the issue and how painful the partner's betrayal of trust might be. I believe you. I am sorry that this has happened to you. Validate that it is NOT her fault. Acknowledge that sadly this happens to many women.

RESPOND/REFER

With a focus on safety and a "Do no harm" approach. Discuss support options with the woman. You will need to decide if you are the best person to provide ongoing support for the woman or whether there is a specialist worker who would be better able to assist. Availability of resources will also determine whether you continue to respond or refer on.

FOLLOW UP

Don't just refer into space, where possible continue to monitor and support client. Check out with client how things are going maybe via text? Ask if they are satisfied with the referral option. Liaise with external agencies working with the client. If the woman returns to see you make sure you recap...Last time you talked about... I am wondering how you are going now? If she cancels or does not return maybe send a text to ask how she is going.

Adapted from D Parkinson "Raped by a partner research report" Women's Health Goulburn North East, 2008.



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