

## INFORMATION SHEET: THIRD PARTY REPORTING (TPR)

Rural Sex Trade *The Vancouver Sun*, Fri 03 Nov 2006

“The victims in the cases had specific histories of trauma, addictions, oppression, racism and a fear of not being believed...It was extremely time-consuming and challenging to find one victim who was willing to give a statement to the police.”

We are pleased to announce that a provincial protocol has been developed regarding third party reporting in sexual offence cases. This protocol includes both RCMP and municipal police and is intended for survivors who are 19 years of age and older.

The protocol will be rolled out in October of 2008 and will make third party reporting in sexual offences accessible through Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs throughout B.C.

### **BACKGROUND:**

For many years, communities throughout BC have attempted to address the fact that very few victims of sexual assault report to the police, particularly those from communities such as Aboriginal women, new immigrants and women in the sex trade.

Like other physical attacks, sexual assault is an act of violence. But sexual assault is a unique crime. It is an act of aggression committed by those who are more powerful against those who are less powerful, most often women, children and people who are particularly discriminated against.

For the general population, sexual assault is among the most under-reported crime in Canada, with only 8% of sexual assaults are reported to police (Stats Canada 2003). For some groups, particularly those with fears and concerns about the justice system, the numbers are even lower. These victims are least likely to report to police.

### **WHAT IS A THIRD-PARTY REPORT?**

A third party report is a process whereby a victim can report a sexual assault to police anonymously, while at the same time receiving support and assistance. In

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collaboration with police in B.C. a process has been developed whereby a Community Victim Assistance Programs that specialize in responding to sexual assault accepts information from a victim about a sexual assault and passes that information on to the police without disclosing the identity of the victim.

This “Third Party Report” can be an option for survivors who would not otherwise provide information to the police. Once the report is made, it enables the police to review the information, look for and evaluate trends, create a profile of the assailant, and/or take other actions such as instituting patrols in the area. Third party reporting also includes a process whereby police can contact the Community-Based Victim Assistance program if they would like to follow up with the survivor. The victim assistance worker would act as a liaison between the survivor and police with the decision whether to engage in the process resting with the survivor.

### **BARRIERS TO REPORTING:**

Survivors of sexual assault report being reluctant to come forward because of fear of retaliation by the assailant, fear that they will not be believed or that they will be judged, and feelings of humiliation and shame.

In the case of immigrant/refugee/visitor women, fear of police authorities because of the system in their country of origin, language barriers and cultural taboos can play a part in fear of reporting.

For women in the sex trade, or who are street involved, the chance of the victim reporting to police is even lower. This, along with other factors, makes this segment of the population even more vulnerable to sexual assault. A survey of sex trade workers in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside revealed that 62% had been sexually assaulted on the job during the previous six months (Currie et al 1995). Studies also show that sexual assault of sex trade workers is more likely to involve physical violence requiring hospitalization and more likely to involve more than one assailant (Miller and Schwartz 1995).

Women in the sex trade may be reluctant to report because of:

- Perception by the public that assault is part of the risk of their lifestyle,
- Mistrust of the system; belief that the system will not respond,
- Fear that they will not be believed,
- Fear that they will be arrested if they have outstanding warrants or
- Fear of retaliation by the assailant.

### **THE BENEFITS OF A COORDINATED PROVINCIAL RESPONSE:**

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The newly created provincial response will ensure that the data gathered is reviewed provincially so that predators that move from one jurisdiction to another can be identified. Other benefits include:

- Allowing someone who has been sexually assaulted in one jurisdiction to report in another;
- Supporting local efforts to establish protocols;
- Facilitating the tracking of transient predators;
- Facilitating broad-based interagency cooperation and learning;
- Heightening awareness and
- Facilitating a consistent, effective response to sexual assault.

### **THIRD PARTY REPORTING; ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

As of June 2008 Community-Based Victim Assistance Workers have been trained and have the mandate and the necessary paper work to facilitate clients to fill out TPR's. A client who fits the criteria for a TPR should be referred to the nearest CBVA program. Unfortunately, at this time we are unable to provide this service locally to communities without CBVA programs.

A listing of the Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs in B.C. is attached.

#### **TPR CRITERIA:**

- The Third Party Reporting option is available to survivors of sexual assault, either recent or historical.
- Survivor must be 19 years of age or older in order to complete the report. (If the survivor was under 19 at the time of the assault, they would still be able to report via TPR as an adult).

#### **ROLE OF REFERRING AGENCY:**

- If an adult victim of a sexual offence attends or contacts your program, and requests to complete a TPR refer the victim to the nearest Community-Based Victim Assistance program (CBVAP).
- If there is no CBVA program in your community, the survivor may be referred to the closest CBVA program or to the local Stopping the Violence Counsellor, for ongoing counselling.

#### **ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED VICTIM SERVICE PROGRAM:**

When a victim discloses a sexual assault to a Community-Based Victim Service program;

- The Community-Based Victim Assistance Worker will meet with the survivor with a focus on providing information and support. The process for making a police report will be discussed and options for reporting outlined.

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- If appropriate; the client will be given the TPR form to fill out with the information that s/he is comfortable in providing.
  - Once completed, the coversheet with the survivor's identifying information is removed and stored by the community agency. The TPR form is forwarded to the nearest designated police agency without information that would identify the victim.
  - During this process and afterward, the survivor will be provided with counselling and support.

#### **ROLE OF POLICE:**

- Police review the report. The information is used to evaluate trends and look for commonalities between this sexual assault and other reports. Based on the amount and quality of information gathered, a preliminary investigation will be undertaken ensuring that the identity of the victim is not jeopardized through any inquiries conducted.
- If there is a need/interest to interview the victim further, the police will contact the Community-Based Victim Assistance Worker to follow up.
- The Community-Based Victim Assistance Worker will contact the victim and forward the police request to meet with her/him. If permission is given, the worker will arrange a meeting with the officer or give the victim's contact information to the investigating officer.
- The decision to give a full report rests with the victim.

#### **REFERENCES:**

Currie, Sue et al. *Assessing the Violence Against Street Involved Women in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Community*. Vancouver, BC: Ministry of Women's Equality, Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (DEYAS), and Watari Research Society, 1995.

Miller, J. and Schwartz, M.D. (1995) "Rape Myths and Violence Against Street Prostitutes." *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 16:1, 1-23.

Statistics Canada. "Sexual Offences in Canada." *Juristat* 85-002, Vol. 23, no. 6. 2003

#### **CONTACT US**

[www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org), click on Community Coordination for Women's Safety, or Phone CCWS at: 604-633-2506, ext 15